

The Princeton Theological Review

Spring 2004

“That They May All Be One”

Reflections on Race and Diversity

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Prolegomena

Jesus looked up to heaven and said... “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”
- John 17

It is truly an honor and privilege to write the prolegomena for this issue of *The Princeton Theological Review*. The theme “‘That They May All Be One’: Reflections on Race and Diversity” arose from several conversations had last spring among the editorial staff and with fellow seminarians concerning the legacy of the late theologian, Charles Hodge, under whose name this journal previously operated. While historians disagree on various aspects of the personal and professional life of this former editor of the original *Princeton Theological Review*, it is undeniable that his opinions concerning racial hierarchy would today rightly be seen as erroneous. In the months following these discussions, much time and energy were spent both grappling with the contemporary influence of the lineage in which this journal stands and thus also discerning how this tradition should affect our scholarship and actions today. In the responses received after our initial call for submissions, a theme continually expressed by the authors concerned racism as evidenced in contemporary Christianity. Thus, while still affirming the important place of critical analyses of the history of oppression and insensitivity in the church and seminary, this issue of the PTR has both a present and a future focus. In what follows I will further clarify our purpose in publishing under this theme by specifically noting what this particular edition is not and what it is.

First, this issue is not a systematic or cohesive presentation of racism in the contemporary

Christian community. In the following pages authors will use different sets of vocabulary and prescribe a variety of actions for the future of the church and seminary. Yet these several vantage points should not be interpreted as contradictory but complementary, with the diversity in perspectives not only representing the multiplicity of experiences of racism but the complexity of racism itself. Ergo, this issue of the PTR is a compilation of accounts that both depict the sin pervasive in the Christian community as well as testify to the multidimensional healing-power of the Gospel. While the scope, audience, and nature of the writing may to some degree vary from article to article, all of the work represented here illuminates aspects of the diverse Christian community; each perspective is not only important but indeed essential to the whole.

Additionally, this issue is in no way a pronouncement of an arrival at a full understanding of racism or the effect that it has on our lives, from which we can simply move on to other pressing topics in Christianity. Furthermore, in selecting this theme the PTR is not merely commenting on a passing trend of diversifying Christian communities, but rather we desire to highlight an issue that is very present and often unacknowledged in many churches. While it is always a danger that these intentions for choosing a topic of discussion could be confused, this should never hinder the act of proclamation itself, for change and accountability cannot be birthed in silence. Hence, this edition of the PTR is a place of learning, listening, and dialogue, uniquely characterized by mourning, anger, growth, and hope. In the following pages, restitution stands alongside reconciliation and justice alongside love. It is our contention that these themes stand at the heart of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the challenge remains for us to be faithful to this message we live to proclaim.



Christina M. Busman, Executive Editor

Embracing the Other

by Miroslav Volf

Who Is the Other? Some people think of others as persons from distant lands with a very different culture. We read about them in books written by explorers and anthropologists, we travel to see them in their natural habitats, they fascinate us and repel us at the same time, and we return from our imaginative or real excursions into their world to the familiarity and tranquility of our own homes. This is the *exotic* other. In our global culture, the exotic other has increasingly become a rarity. We travel with ease over vast expanses, and the mass media has placed at our disposal vivid reports even from the most hidden and impenetrable regions of the globe. It could seem that we have come to understand others much better. But this is by and large not the case. For a real understanding requires a deeper knowledge than available through written reports, films or short visits. The ease of access to others has only stripped down from them the aura of the exotic. They have become ordinary—but still misunderstood.

The same communication networks that make it easy for us to meet and learn about distant others have brought multiple others to live in our immediate proximity. This is the *neighborly* other. Such others live next to us, at the boundaries of our communities and within our nations. Put differently, we live increasingly in culturally and religiously *pluralistic* social spaces. For Western countries, for instance, this means that the pluralism of civil associations existing under the larger framework of liberal democracy has been complexified. Formerly “Christian countries” have become religiously diverse nations (cf. D.L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How A ‘Christian Country’ Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation* [HarperCollins, 2001]).

But this is not a diversity of “anything goes.” For the most part, we don’t think that all religion and all values are either relative or that there is a rough parity between them. To say that our societies are culturally and religiously pluralistic is not so much to prescribe how each culture should be evaluated and how they should relate, but to note that a plurality of cultures is a social reality. We live near or with people whose values and overarching interpretations of life differ markedly from ours and who have sufficient social power to make their voice heard in the public square. In terms of

living with the other, the main challenge today is this rubbing shoulders with diverse people in an increasingly pluralistic world.

Who are the others? They are people of different races, religions, and cultures, who live in our proximity and with whom we are often in tension and sometimes in deadly conflict. But who are we?

Who Are We?

It is not possible to speak of “the other” without speaking of “the self,” not of otherness without speaking of identity. For the others are always others to someone else, and just like that someone else they too are to themselves simply “us” as distinct from “them.” We often define ourselves by what differentiates us from others. That by which we differ from others is properly and exclusively our own, and it is in what is exclusively our own that our identity resides, we sometimes think. If we operate with such an *exclusive* notion of identity, we will watch carefully to make sure that no external elements enter our proper space so as to disturb the purity of our identity. Especially in situations of economic and political uncertainty and conflict, we will insist on pure identity. If race matters to us, then we will want our “blood” to be pure, untainted by the “blood” of strangers. If land matters to us, then we will want our soil to be pure, without the presence of others. If culture matters to us, then we will want our language and customs to be pure, cleansed of foreign words and foreign ways. This is the *logic of purity*. It attends the notion of identity which rests on difference from the other. The consequences of the logic of purity in a pluralistic world are often deadly. We have to keep the other at bay, even by means of extreme violence, so as to avoid contamination.

An alternative way to construe identity is to think of it as always including the other. This is an inclusive understanding of identity. As persons or cultural groups, we define ourselves not simply by what distinguishes us from others and what we therefore need to keep pure from others. Instead, we define ourselves both by what distinguishes us from others and by what

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we have in common with them. This notion of identity is consonant with the OT account of creation. In Genesis God creates by separating things (say, the light from the darkness) and binding them together. When God creates a human pair, God both separates Eve from Adam and brings her to him so that they can become one flesh. Distinct-and-bound creatures necessarily have complex identities because they are what they are not just in and of themselves but also in relation to others.

For such inclusive identity, two things are critically important, and they both concern boundaries. First, in order to have an identity, or to have anything except infinite chaos, we must have boundaries. Hence when God creates, God separates. If boundaries are good, then some kind of boundary maintenance must be good too. Hence when boundaries are threatened (as they often are in a variety of ways), they must be maintained. Second, if to have identity one must have boundaries, then to have inclusive identity one must have *permeable and flexible* boundaries. With impermeable and inflexible boundaries, a self or a group will ultimately remain alone, without the other. For the other to come in and change the self or a group, the other must be let in (and, likely after a while also politely let out!). When we enter new relationships, they shape us; our boundaries are flexible and our identity dynamic.

Some of that change simply happens to us. Others with whom we are in close contact change, and as a consequence we change too. When my son, Nathanael, came into our family, I changed, whether I wanted to change or not. Moreover, I changed in ways that I could not fully control. Relationships are by definition made up of more actors than one, and persons can react to the presence and action of others, but they can neither control fully that to which they will react nor the conditions under which they will react. Chance and unpredictability come with having permeable and flexible boundaries. At the same time, we can refuse movement of our identity in certain directions and we can initiate movements in other directions. In encounters with others we are not a rudderless boat at high seas. We can significantly craft our identity, and in the process we can even help shape the identities of others.

Who are we? We are people with inclusive and changing identities; multiple others are part of who we are. We can try to eject them from ourselves in order to craft for ourselves an exclusive identity, but we will then do violence not only to others, but also to ourselves. Who is the other? Others are our neighbors who

differ from us by culture and whose very otherness is often a factor in our conflicts with them. Now, after the discussion of inclusive identity, we can say that the others are also not *just* others. They too have complex and dynamic identities, of which we are part, if we are their neighbors. Just as we are “inhabited” by others and have a history with them, others are also “inhabited” by us. If persons and groups are attuned to such complex and dynamic identities, they will not relate to each other according to simple binary schemata: “I am

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I and you are you” (in case of persons) or “you are either in or out” (in case of groups). Their relations will be correspondingly complex.

How Should We Relate to Each Other?

The Will to Embrace the Other

The commitment to live with others is the simplest, but also the most difficult, aspect of our relation with them. Instead of considering others as my own diminishment, I have to imagine them as potential enrichment. Instead of thinking that they disfigure my social landscape, I have to think of them as potentially contributing to its aesthetic improvement. Instead of only suspecting enemies, I have to see them as potential friends.

We have reasons for wanting to keep others at bay. For one, we are afraid for our identity. Above all we fear being overwhelmed by others and their ways. There is a German word for this fear: *Überfremdung*. It is as if a guest in your home would start to bring in her own furniture and rearrange and take out yours, cook foods and play music you do not like, and bang around working when you would like to sleep. So you say to your guest as politely as you can, “This is *my* home, and this is not how I want to live. Go back to your own place, and there you can live as you please. Here we are going to live as I please.” Globalization brings others into our proximity. The consequence is often the feeling of *Überfremdung*. Smaller cultures, like the Macedonian and the Albanian, are threatened by the huge wave of global mono-culture washing over them. They are attracted to many of its features, but

they fear that the centuries-long, rich traditions which give them a sense of identity will be replaced by a culture foreign and shallow. Prosperous Western democracies worry that the processes of globalization, which bring to their lands people in search of better living, will undermine the very culture that made possible the freedoms and prosperity which they enjoy.

Second, we fear for our *safety*. The myth of an “innocent other” is just that—a myth. Relationships between people are always sites of contested power, and there is a permanent danger of misuse of power, especially between those who are reciprocally “other.” Yet we should guard lest we, in refusing to accept the myth of the innocent other, embrace two other myths at the same time: the myth of the “innocent self” and of the “demonic other.”

Third, *old enmities* make us hesitate about living with the other. We know that old wounds can lead to new injuries. Even when our safety is reasonably assured, either because we have become more powerful or because both parties have been inserted into a larger network of relations which guarantee our safety, we may still hesitate about living together with the other on moral grounds. Would positive relations with the other not amount to betrayal of our ancestors who have suffered at others’ hand? Would we not betray ourselves if we reconciled with our former enemy? Finally, the brute fact of enmity pushes against the commitment to con-sociality. Just like sin in general according to the Christian tradition, enmity has power. Once established, it is a force beyond the individual wills of actors, and it perpetuates itself by holding enemies captive.

Our sense of identity, fear for safety, and old enmities all militate against the will to embrace the other. So why should we want to embrace the other? First, it may be in our *interest* to do so. The alternatives—either building a wall of separation or perpetuating enmity—are often much worse. As proximate others, we are intertwined by bonds of economy, culture, and family. Severing these bonds can be worse than trying to live together. But the more important reason is that living with the other in peace is an expression of our God-given *humanity*. We are created not to isolate ourselves from others but to engage them, indeed, to contribute to their flourishing, as we nurture our own identity and attend to our own well-being. Finally, for Christians, the most important reason for being willing not only to live with others but positively to embrace them is the character of God’s love as displayed in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ died for all human beings

because he loved them all. Though not divine and though in no way capable of redeeming anyone, human beings, too, should love indiscriminately, each and every human being, including not only “the other” but also the enemy.

We may be persuaded that it is good to embrace others, and we may want to embrace them, but still find ourselves unable to do so. Our fears and enmities may get the best of us. Our previous failures may make us lose hope. How do we acquire the will to embrace the other? How do we sustain it through difficult times? Ultimately, the will to embrace comes from the divine Spirit of embrace, which can open up our self-enclosed sense of identity, dispel our fears, and break down the hold of enmity over us.

The appeal to the Spirit does not exclude other sources of the will to embrace but includes them. The Spirit of embrace is the Creator Spirit, who has fashioned human beings to live in loving relationships with others. So we may well be motivated by the fulfillment

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that love provides. The Spirit of embrace is also the Redeemer Spirit, who is calling into being communities which embody and through their practices transmit the will to embrace. So our characters may be shaped through communities of embrace. And yet ultimately the source of the will is that same Spirit which rested on Jesus Christ and led Him to die for the ungodly.

Inverting Perspectives

To live out the will to embrace we need to engage in inverting perspectives. But before we discuss “inverting perspectives,” it is important to note one important feature of otherness. It is a reciprocal relation: if others are “other” to me, then I am an “other” to them. This is especially important to keep in mind in cases when otherness is not just a neutral term to describe difference, but when otherness acquires derogatory connotations, when to be other means not to be as good in some regard as I am myself.

Once we understand reciprocity involved in the relation of otherness, we will have more reasons to be interested not only in what we think about ourselves

and about others, but also in what others think of themselves and of us. This is what I mean by “inverting perspectives.” There are pragmatic reasons for this endeavor. Not attending to other people’s imaginations of us may be dangerous. But there are also moral reasons for this inverting of perspectives. Commitments to truth, to justice, to life in peace with others all require it. We cannot live truthful, just, and peaceful lives with others in a complex world if the only perspective we are willing to entertain is our own.

What does inverting perspectives entail? First, we need to *see others through their own eyes*. This requires a willingness to entertain the possibility that we may be wrong and others right in their assessment of themselves, a leap of imagination to place ourselves in their position, a temporary bracketing of our own understanding of them, and receptive attention to their own story about who they see themselves to be.

Second, we need to *see ourselves through the eyes of others*. Because we often fail to see ourselves adequately, we need to learn how we are perceived by others. Take as an example the debate on so-called orientalism (the stereotypes that the Christian West has about the Muslim East) and occidentalism (the stereotypes that the Muslim East has about the Christian West). Where the West may see itself as “prosperous,” the East may see it as “decadent”; where the West may see itself as “freedom loving,” the East may see it as “oppressive”; where the West may see itself as “rational,” the East may see it as “calculating” (cf. A. Margalit and I. Buruma, “Occidentalism,” *New York Review of Books* [January 2002]).

Inverting perspectives is second nature for the weak. In encounters with the strong, they always have to attend to how they and their actions are perceived by the strong. Their success and even survival depend on seeing themselves with the eyes of the other. The strong are not in the habit of taking into account what the weak think of them; they can do without inverting perspective. If the weak do not like what they see, so much the worse for the weak. If the only thing that matters to the strong is power and privilege, they will charge ahead, without regard for the perspective of the weak. But if they want to be truthful and just, they will want the weak to free them from their own false judgments of themselves and of their relations with others.

Engagement with the Other

To see oneself and the other from the perspective of the other is not the same as agreeing with the other. As I invert perspective, I bracket my own self-under-

standing and the understanding of the other and I suspend judgment. After I have understood how the other wishes to be understood and how the other understands me, I must exercise judgment and either agree or disagree, wholly or in part. This is where argumentative engagement comes in.

I could refuse to engage the other with arguments. I could simply insist that I am right. But the result would be irreconcilable clashing of perspectives. In the absence of arguments, the relative power of social actors would decide the outcome. Furthermore, some would argue that arguments cannot be rationally adjudicated across multiple communities. There is no common ground between them, the argument goes, and therefore we are left with conflicting rationalities, which is to say that we are left with conflict. But the claim that there is no common ground between “others” seems patently false. Even if we all have our own maximalist definitions of moral terms shaped by culturally specific and “thick” morality, we also share minimalist moral definitions which “are embedded in the maximal morality” (M. Walzer, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad* [Notre Dame, 1994] 3). We can argue successfully over cultural boundary lines because we understand and for the most part acknowledge minimalist definitions of relevant terms. When incommensurability threatens between diverse communities, it is not because in principle rational argumentation between them is impossible, but because the readiness to seek through common discourse the truth which transcends one’s own convictions is lacking or because the communities do not possess even an elementary willingness to share the same social space.

Positive engagement with the other is not just a matter of arguments. Even when arguments fail to bring anything like consensus or convergence, we can still cooperate in many ways, unless a dispute concerns acts of grave injustice. The belief that we must agree on overarching interpretative frameworks and all essential values in order to live in peace is mistaken. It ultimately presupposes that peace can exist only if cultural sameness reigns. But even if one considered such sameness desirable, it is clearly unachievable. Take major world religions as an example. A consensus between them on overarching interpretations of the world is not on the horizon in the near future. Must their adherents be therefore at war with one another? Of course not—they can live in peace and cooperate, their fundamental disagreements notwithstanding, and they can do so out of their own properly religious resources. Though the practice of Christians sometimes

seems to falsify this claim, everything in the Christian faith itself speaks in favor of it, from the simple and explicit injunction to live in peace with *all* people (Rom 12:18) to the character of God as triune love (cf. M. Volf, *Christianity and Violence* [forthcoming]).

Embrace of the Other

A simple willingness to embrace the other does not suffice. A further step of actually embracing them is needed. As we are arguing with others about issues of truth and justice, we are making sure that embrace, if it takes place, will not be a sham, a denial of truth and trampling on justice. As we are engaged in inverting perspectives, we have started embracing others in that we have taken them, even if only in a symbolic form and for a time, into our own selves; we have made their

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eyes our own. Furthermore, we need to make space for them in our own identity and in our social world (though how that space will be made remains open for negotiations). We need to let them reshape our identity so as to become part of who we are, yet without in any way threatening or obliterating us but rather helping to establish the rich texture of our identity.

Such welcome is possible on Christian terms because we Christians should not think of ourselves as having a pure national, cultural, racial, or ethnic identity. Not only do we, along with Jews and Muslims, believe that all human beings are creatures of one God and therefore that the humanity which unites them is more significant than any difference that may divide them. Further, an image of the Christian life which looms large in the Bible and in the Christian tradition is that of a *pilgrim*. A pilgrim is not defined primarily by the land or culture through which he or she is traveling, but by the place toward which he or she is on the way; his or her primary identity comes from the destination, not from any point along the journey. And the land toward which Christians are moving is God's new world, in which people from "all tribes and languages" will be gathered. Being a pilgrim does not exclude a whole range of secondary identities (e.g., citizenship, ethnicity, woman or mother). But in Christian under-

standing, all these identities ought to be subordinated to the primary identity as a person on the way to God's new world.

The unsettling of Christians' sense of cultural identity cuts deep. The Apostle Paul writes that Christians "are not their own." This is a strange thing to say. A lot of things are my own, and I guard them carefully. And it would seem that what is more my own than anything else is myself. And yet the Apostle insists that we are not our own, but belong to the Lord. As a Christian in Paul's sense, I am so much not myself that "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). Christian identity is taken out of our own hands and placed into the hands of the divine Other, and by this it is both radically unsettled and unassailably secured. Because Christ defines our identity in the primary way, Christians can confidently set on a journey with proximate others and engage without fear in the give and take of the relationship with others that marks an inclusive identity. What will be the result of this engagement? Like Abraham's, it will be a journey of faith and hope toward the land which one has not yet seen.

But should we not maintain our boundaries so as to protect our cultural identities? Yes, we should. If I am crushed in the process of embrace with the other, this is no longer an embrace but an act of covert aggression. Whereas the *will* to embrace the other is unconditional, the *embrace itself* is not. It is conditioned, first, on the preservation of the integrity of the self. Boundaries are good, I argued earlier, because discrete identities themselves are a good. And because both are good, they have to be protected. Supplementing my earlier argument for the protection of identities—of one's self and of one's group—by appealing to *creation*, an additional point can be argued on the basis of *redemption*. Since God showed redeeming love in Christ for all humanity, the self cannot be excluded as a legitimate object of love. I should love myself, provided my love of self is properly related to the love of God and of the neighbor. And since I can love myself, I can certainly love my group because such love includes both the love of the neighbor and the love of the self (since my own well-being is often connected with the well-being of my group). Hence one is entitled to ensure that the embrace of the other does not endanger the self.

Moreover, the embrace is predicated on settling of the disputes with the other around the questions of truth and justice. How should these questions be settled? For Christians, the guardian at the boundaries of identity is Christ, and the self inhabited by Christ is

therefore committed to making the story of Jesus Christ his or her own story. A one-word summary of that story is *grace*. Now grace is grace only against the backdrop of the law of justice. I am gracious in situations of conflict if I forego the rightful claims of the law, forgive, and reconcile with the other. I am gracious in situations of need if I do not only what the law of justice prescribes, but also engage in acts of generosity toward the needy. In the act of grace the law of justice is not inoperative; to the contrary, its demands are implicitly recognized as valid. In showing grace, however, I “transgress” the law of justice, not by doing less than it requires, but by doing more (cf. J. Murphy, “Mercy and Legal Justice,” in *Forgiveness and Mercy* [Cambridge, 1988] 169).

Two things follow from this understanding of grace. First, grace is very much compatible with ongoing arguments between parties about what relations between them would be just and with the demand that one not be treated unjustly. Second, the receiver of grace has no claim on the grace of the giver; though the giver may be obliged to give (as Christians are obliged to forgive), the receiver cannot demand to be given.



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A Pentecostal Vision for the Church

A Reflection on Acts 2:1-11

By Jin S. Kim

It has often been said that 11:00 A.M. on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America. How has a pluralistic nation, the land of immigrants once known as a melting pot, come to a state of such racial segregation in the church? Americans by and large work together, shop together, and play together, but they do not worship together. If we are at our core spiritual, then the fact that we seem unable and unwilling to relate to one another elbow-to-elbow in the pews of the local congregation reveals how fragile the integrity of the church is. While “one nation under God” is the articulated ideal, it is perhaps more accurate to say that we are many religio-ethnic ghettos under God. How good is the “Good News” if it extends only to those in one’s cultural, racial-ethnic enclave? How powerful is the gospel if it cannot break down the walls of racial separation? How authentic is our evangelistic witness if it is proclaimed only to those in one’s socio-economic circle?

According to the US Census for the year 2000, over 30% of the population is non-White, and yet most mainline denominations remain overwhelmingly White. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), for example, is 94% Caucasian as of 1999, and the other denominations, whether they be mainline or conservative, share similar statistics. In the 19th century, slavery prevented an integrated church; up until the Civil Rights era of the 20th century, it was the impact of the Jim Crow laws. What excuse does the church have for continued segregation? One could argue that in a free country, people are free to worship and associate with whom they choose. Fair enough, but the question remains: Why do Christians choose to worship separately? Upon closer inspection, this truism merely covers over a deeper, uglier truth of the church’s failure to embody a gospel in its original splendor, power, and scope. To borrow a phrase from J. B. Phillips, the God of the dominant church is too small to include the various cultures and ethnicities of the increasingly diverse American demographic. The church’s failure is in remaining monocultural while society has become multicultural.

A clear distinction must be made between a multiracial church and a multicultural church. A White

church with a spattering of minorities is nominally a multiracial church because the membership consists of people from more than one race. It is not a multicultural church, however, if there is room for only one dominant culture, and all others are marginalized. I hear this lament often from my colleagues: We open the door and welcome the minorities in our community, and they will visit, but they will not stay. Little do people realize that most congregations exude an “understanding” that there is one dominant culture operative in that congregation – the White culture – and all non-Whites are expected to check their cultural assumptions at the door. This is no less true for an African American church, or other ethnic churches. In a Korean congregation, for example, a few White, Black, or Hispanic members may be scattered in the pews, but everyone understands that the prevailing culture is Korean, the dominant language is Korean, the leadership is Korean, and most impacting of all, the gospel will be interpreted through the lens of the Korean experience. Most multiracial churches are, in fact, monocultural.¹

Our race, ethnicity, and culture are integral to who we are; more than that, they are God’s gift to God’s people. If a White believer must check his “whiteness” at the door of a Black church, or if a Mexican Christian must check her “Mexicanness” at the door of a White church, or even if a Korean adoptee must check his unique adoptee culture at the door of a Korean church, then the price of admission is grossly distorted. Incorporation into a church should depend solely on a person’s willingness to be transformed by the liberating Word and Sacraments of the God of boundless grace. The natural consequence of an insistently monocultural church is a mono-racial membership. The problem of racial segregation in the church is persistent because it is so insidious. No external factors compel a congregation to be of one color, but the unspoken insistence that the “identity,” “tradition,” and “heritage” of a congregation be preserved becomes the justification for remaining a monocultural church. We American

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Christians suffer from poor memory if we forget that the first church described in Acts was a multiracial, multilingual, and multicultural church. That *is* our identity, tradition, and heritage.

The church of the 21st century must be completely reoriented from one that sees itself primarily as a *fellowship* of believers, to one where the *mission of God* is preeminent – a mission that forges a new and unexpected fellowship of diverse believers committed to a common goal. When we examine the origin of the church at Pentecost, we witness people who naturally had little in common – Jews, proselyte-Gentiles, Cretans and Arabs – filled and overwhelmed by the one Holy Spirit, speaking of the mighty deeds of God (Acts 2:10-11). The first church consisted of people from all over the world, of diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.² In fact, they prophesied in a bewildering number of languages, so that some passers-by thought them to be drunk, but all the prophecies witnessed to the glory of the one true God. Pentecost becomes the undoing of the curse of Babel – people still speak different languages, but they all praise one God!³ The church of Pentecost does not begin as we might expect. We are apt to be more familiar with churches that get their start when like-minded people gather with those of similar background in order to find spiritual comfort and fellowship. There appears to be nothing wrong with this on the surface, except that there is a subtle but powerful understanding that the church will inevitably reflect the norms, mores, and aspirations of the foundational leadership who are, by and large, monocultural. Darrell Guder argues, “Thus, no particular culture...may now be regarded as normative for the gospel community.”⁴ It is not necessary or desirable to rid the church of culture. The church, however, must be on guard so that no one culture becomes an idolatrous substitute for the gospel.

The degree to which a typical congregation acts as a culturally captive organism becomes evident when a neighborhood changes, but the congregation does not. When a downtown church loses most of its middle class Caucasian members to the suburbs, it naturally struggles over its identity. As an increasing number of new immigrants and the poor in the surrounding neighborhood come to worship, a core member and bearer of the church’s institutional memory will typically say, “But this is not who we are.”⁵ The inner city landscape is littered with these ecclesiastical corpses, dying when the prevailing culture dies in that congregation. Sometimes, the few remaining members will magnani-

mously “hand over” the church to an ethnic or immigrant group with few resources but a lot of spirit – this is known as “redevelopment.” Rarely does such a declining congregation reinvent itself, its identity and its mission, so that the church has a new purpose for

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being, becoming a vital force in the community. This phenomenon is so rare that when it happens, a book or article will be written about it.

By contrast, the Pentecostal church in Jerusalem was a church of many races, cultures and tongues. Its unity came from the Holy Spirit who gave all the different believers one purpose: to witness to the mighty deeds of God (Acts 2:11). Things went downhill from there. Some 2000 years later, a church that began as a multicultural, multilingual, multinational church has become in America a Black church, a White church, a Korean church, a Coptic church, and in a dizzying array of denominations. We have for the past 2000 years been going backward, not forward, in realizing this Pentecostal vision. It is true that in most countries one finds a relatively monocultural, monoethnic demographic. In the case of Korea, my country of origin, the demographic is approximately 99% Korean if counting permanent residents. In such a context, one cannot expect a multiethnic/multicultural church.

There was a time when the United States was comprised mostly of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (excluding slaves). In such a context, one expects the churches to reflect that culture. Thus, the legacy of slavery’s impact is critical to understanding the persistent monocultural nature of the modern church in America. The White masters were all too pleased to see their slaves converted to Christianity, but the slaves would be relegated to a sort of minor league Christianity with no chance of making it to the majors. In sports, Black professional leagues created by victims of segregation dissolved when Major League Baseball, the NFL, and the NBA became integrated. Imagine if this did not happen. The Negro League with talent like Sammy Sosa and Barry Bonds would probably eclipse MLB as the dominant league. The consequences of a White-only NBA without players like Michael Jordan, Shaquille O’Neil, or Kobe Bryant would have been catastrophic. The smartest thing that sports did was to

desegregate. Because this failed to happen in the church, Black Christians stopped wanting to play in the “Big Leagues” and created their own church that has become a major power in the social, economic, political, and religious landscape of America, not to mention the influence it wields in African American society. In the same way that White abolitionists applied enormous pressure to end slavery, White Christians could have led the charge in integrating society by integrating their churches. Could the incorporation of Black spirituality, liminal theology, dynamic preaching, and the

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unique charisms of the African American Christian community have brought about a revival of the church? How is it that every area of society has been immeasurably enriched by the integration of African Americans, from arts to sports to academia to politics to entertainment, except the church? The historic, mainline church, the PCUSA, to which I belong, is in the midst of a precipitous decline in membership, influence, and relevance. Could this trend have been averted if Black and other racial ethnic Christians were treated as more than colorful garnish to adorn the White “meat and potatoes” church? Needless to say, both the White church and the Black church are impoverished because of self-imposed segregation.

The way out of this ecclesial mess is for churches to take seriously the task of evangelism. Through the prism of Acts 2:1-11 I define evangelism as the act of proclaiming the good news of God’s deeds of power, including the power to overcome human barriers and alienation, in multiple tongues to people of all cultures and nationalities. Indeed, James Brownson states, “God’s presence is irreducibly multicultural.”⁶ The American church, though it has failed to seize the opportunity in the past, is still blessed to have the opportunity to become a truly multicultural, Pentecostal church. This goal is more attainable than ever as no community in America remains untouched by vast demographic shifts. Demographers predict that people of color will become the majority by 2050, and this is already the case in California. Countless churches in the cities and suburbs (and increasingly in rural areas) are located in the midst of very diverse

racial ethnic constituencies. This is a crisis that can be seen either as danger or opportunity. It is danger if the church sees itself primarily as a fellowship (longstanding members often have no idea how to incorporate “those people” into the existing monocultural fellowship). On the other hand, it is opportunity if the church sees itself as a missional community (existing members become excited by new prospects for ministry). A new attitude could emerge among the old members: “We ministered in one language to one culture, because that was what our neighborhood looked like then...now, we will minister in multiple languages to multiple cultures because that is what our neighborhood looks like today.” The Christian church is enriched because we have four testimonies of the gospel of Jesus Christ – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – representing the various cultural and theological perspectives of four different evangelists.⁷ The church today can also enjoy that kind of richness if we include multicultural perspectives when witnessing to the mighty deeds of God.

A church can become a Pentecostal church only if it relinquishes its cultural identity rooted in social fellowship, and adopts the *missio Dei* emanating from the Trinity as its *raison d’être*. David Bosch states, “The classical doctrine on the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another ‘movement’: Father, Son and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.”⁸ The church’s mission, then, is not fellowship; rather, Christian fellowship is a gift of God to give us strength for the journey in doing the mission of God. Fellowship is genuine only when engaged for the purpose of mission. In a time when the fissures are turning into fractures between Christians and Muslims, Muslims and Hindus, Jews and Palestinians, East and West, it is good news indeed that God calls all peoples, nationalities and tongues to proclaim the wonderful deeds of God’s power. As a demographic microcosm of the world, the American church should take advantage of this marvelous opportunity to become a Pentecostal church. America in the 21st century is much like the Palestine of the first century – cosmopolitan, mercantile, multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural, a political, social, and economic crossroads for the world. Palestine connected three continents, but even more continents converge on the streets of New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. The church was born in that exciting context, and took full advantage of the richness of that diversity. The early church continued to break down barriers between clean

and unclean, circumcised and uncircumcised, Jew and Greek, male and female, slave and free.

Was it an accident that the first church began as a multicultural church? Even though the church got its start in a tiny corner of a great empire, the church became global in scope from inception because “the whole world” was represented at Pentecost. Before the church went out into the world, the world came to Palestine to form the first church. To have the opportunity to create a Pentecostal church in 21st century America is an unimaginable blessing, and the fruit of longsuffering and faithfulness in pursuing this vision will surely be no less bountiful than that experienced by the first church in Acts. The church must then relinquish its identity, nurtured over the centuries, as a fellowship of Christians undergirded by a common culture. We are to be accepted for who we are, but the true church is about who we are to *become* by the grace of God. We come with our uniqueness and our particularities, but we become incorporated into the body of Christ as we witness to the saving act of Jesus for all humankind. The church is truly the church when it accepts the call to be God’s ambassador (*apostolos*) in proclaiming the good news (*euangelizesthai*). And the good news is that God’s goodness and power are greater than humanity’s rebellion and alienation. God’s grace is sufficient to break down barriers that human beings have erected against God and against one another. Is not the church the bearer of this good news, and the body ordained by God to be a demonstration of this new reality, the inbreaking of the reign of God?

Evangelism, then, is the preaching and embodying of the infinite grace of God. Evangelism is engaging in the act of wonder, and inviting others to share in that wonder, recognizing that the story of God is greater than our capacity to grasp it. Evangelism is admitting: God is bigger than we. The church must see itself as having no beginning and no end; it is always in the present witnessing to the incarnational presence of God. The particular church in its institutional form may perhaps mark a time when it was founded, and when it closes its doors for the last time, but a church with a theological and missional understanding of its identity can never point to itself in regards to origin or destination. “The entire drama of evangelism is *definitionally unfinished* and must be rendered repeatedly in all its parts <for> the gospel is not a ‘done deal’ when its dramatic character is understood.”⁹ We never finish telling the story...we just tell it in new ways.

In the film “The Deer Hunter,” there is a scene where champagne glasses are stacked one on top of the other. As champagne is poured into the top glass, it overflows onto the next one until all are filled. The church is like such a champagne glass – grace is received without limit, until the church cannot contain it and grace overflows to the next vessel. Evangelism is demonstrating to the world that God is indeed gracious, and desires to pour this grace into the world as God has done for the church.¹⁰ The fact that the church is a penultimate sign of the grace of God in no way diminishes the power and magnitude of that grace. The church receives new mercies when it pours out God’s grace. A church that is endlessly pouring out, endlessly evangelizing (giving the gospel away), is a church that will always be filled with new life. Our cup runneth over only when we are being poured out as a libation.¹¹ Indeed, this is possible because “God is a fountain of sending love.”¹²

The prospect of giving the gospel away to new communities, receiving the gospel through new interpretive lenses, and engaging in mission together with new partners ought to elicit excitement, not dread. The church is merely a vessel, so its form is not as important as its content. A church, however beautiful externally, that does not submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit, that does not become soft clay for God to mold and remold at His pleasure and for His purpose, is a

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church that will be shattered. Each individual, tradition and culture reflects only a few facets of God. But when believers of multiple traditions gather to worship the one true God, faith becomes more dynamic and brilliant as the glory of God is seen through many facets. The denomination to which I belong has no vision of this. Alas, the best that our leadership can imagine is a church that includes an increasing number of racial ethnic churches, so that we may have the appearance of diversity. But this “diversity” only turns up in the aggregate, and rarely in the local church. There are two main reasons for the lack of a

Pentecostal vision in the midst of a Pentecostal situation:

First, the church in America has become a hoarding church.

1) The church hoards money. Not satisfied with tithes and offerings, many churches aggressively seek bequests and endowments – death money, I call it. There are special cases where this may be appropriate, of course. In general, insufficient offerings of the people to support the ministry may be a sign that the church needs to reinvent itself for a new mission, or close its doors, releasing its people to join more vibrant congregations. Let it be noted that a pastor must not be used as an executive director of a foundation, for the church is never a foundation; it is the living body of Christ. A pastor ought never to function as a development officer, raising funds to prop up a dying congregation, or worse, seeking the perpetual financial security of an already wealthy church.

2) The church hoards members. The signs and banners say something about worshiping God and serving the community, but by its actions, many churches prove that their primary mission is the gathering of members, not the sending of witnesses. Of course, the gathering is important, even essential, to being the people of God, but we must understand that the gathering is not much more than a huddle, to use an analogy from American football. In the huddle the people of God encourage one another, correct one another, and strategize for the coming of God's kingdom. Nonetheless, the real action begins when the ball is snapped, or when the gospel is proclaimed in the town square and in the marketplace. Too many congregations aim to hoard members for the huddle, but have no appetite for playing the game (or running the race – 2 Tim. 4:7).

3) The church hoards property. The hoarding of members and money leads to the hoarding of property. Since most local churches are founded on fellowship and the constant enhancement of that fellowship, there seems to be no limit to the construction of larger, more comfortable, more palatial structures to house this “fellowship.” George Carlin's observation that Americans constantly move into bigger homes to create more room in which to put all their stuff seems all too apt for the church as well. How many dying congregations hold on to their property for dear life, as if real estate were the equivalent of the church? How

many presbyteries choose to sell the property of a dying congregation for profit, rather than investing it with an immigrant congregation with a lot of heart but little resources?

4) The church hoards gifts. The obsession with the well-being of the local congregation, euphemistically called “building up the body of Christ,” limits the spiritual gifts of the church to its internal fellowship.¹³ Caring for one another is most certainly one of the marks of a healthy church, but how often do we hear, “Why are we _____ (fill in the blank, i.e. sending money overseas, volunteering at a food bank, etc.) when we have needy people in our own congregation?” An ecclesiastical provincialism chokes off any attempt to focus the congregation's efforts toward mission. This rhetorical question is just as disingenuous as the question of why expensive perfume was being wasted on Jesus' feet rather than sold and given to the poor. Pouring our gifts at the feet of Jesus is a kingdom value that puts the church at odds with the worldly value of rational self-interest.

*Second, the church in America has become a whoring church, selling itself to the world at cut-rate prices.*¹⁴

1) The church is bought. As Bonhoeffer reminded us, grace is free, but that does not make it cheap. Sincere Christians would agree that the gospel is priceless, yet a stroll through countless local churches reveals that item after item is marked “in honor of” a clearly named donor. The stained glass window, the organ, the pew, the couch, even the bibles and hymnals all bear the names of those who traded money for recognition. The new addition is called the “Smith Chapel,” or the “Johnson Library,” or the “Jones Fellowship Hall,” in much the same way that Candlestick Park is now called 3Com Park, and even the New Year's Eve celebration at Times Square is officially sponsored by Discover Card. Church buildings are littered with human names inscribed on plaques that seem to compete with the Name above all names. This unseemly practice gives the impression that the gospel does indeed have a price, and it appears to be low.

2) The church is sold. There are churches whose rental income or investment income is higher than offerings. Although such churches would certainly be a small minority, the business mindset,

I would argue, is pervasive. What is the point of a church renting out its facilities to AA, Senior Care, YMCA, and other groups not as a form of mission, but as a way of subsidizing a shrinking congregation? What is the point of a church that, having lost its vitality long ago, continues to exist off the interest earned on bequests left by once grateful members? Is the purpose of the church to remain solvent, to remain operational? Is it to provide dividends to its shareholder-members, no matter how few are left? Is the church a church when it has no mission other than survival?

3) The church is desperate. The notion of membership in the modern mainline church is a joke. No faith, commitment, learning, or service is required of a member. A church with no mission needs bodies to justify its existence. Devoid of a vision for becoming disciples of Jesus Christ and apostles for the kingdom of God, a congregation in its desperation will lower its membership requirements until there is no requirement at all. What results is a congregation in which a good portion does not have a personal relationship with Jesus, and therefore cannot discern their call. In order to increase the commitment level of members who were assured no commitment is required, they are elected deacons and elders. It is a terrible indictment on the Presbyterian Church (USA) that we have countless officers who cannot confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of the world. The desperation extends to the next generation. The fact that the average age of a PCUSA member is 56 means that most churches have few or no youth and young adults in their midst. Although there are churches that use the option of electing youth elders to truly empower and appreciate the gifts of young people, many more use this option to obscure the fact that the congregation has not made youth ministry a priority and has no viable youth program. Instead, the session now includes a mascot called a “youth elder” to be able to say, “You see, we do care about our youth.” The quality of both the membership and the leadership reflect the church’s desperate grasping at straws, and the congregation suffers for upholding a lowest-common-denominator standard.

4) The church belittles its gifts. The natural consequence of membership devoid of requirements is the administration of the sacraments without condition. The PCUSA’s Book of Order speaks eloquently about the meaning of baptism and the

Lord’s Supper, and how important preparation is for the receiving of these signs of grace. Unfortunately, the rite of baptism has become a right of individuals. Few churches deny infant baptism, no matter how clear the signs that the parent(s) have no intention of raising their child in the way of faith and in the midst of a believing community. Pastors recite the words of institution before serving communion, but how many teach that partaking the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner invites the judgment of God? The church’s responsibility for discerning the body of Christ has been replaced by the individual’s right to partake in the sacraments without repentance, rebirth, or renewal. A church that intentionally desecralizes the sacraments is one whose integrity is at stake.

Only when the church frees itself from these captivities, can the church begin to reclaim the spirit of Pentecost. Declining congregations would do well to let go of their cultural identities and find a new identity rooted in mission, not origin. Well-to-do congregations need to drop the haughty attitude of *noblesse oblige*, the notion of the church as a dispenser of gifts. Indulgent congregations need to remember that God is merciful, not indulgent.¹⁵ A Pentecostal church will be full of struggles, like any church, but the struggles will primarily be focused on evangelism and mission, not identity politics. As the church at Pentecost was comprised of many cultures but one mission, the church in America has a similar opportunity to model for the world the gathering of diverse Christians worshiping together to be sent by God for a common mission. The church must erase the ugly blot of racial segregation from among the fellowship of believers, which has been a devastating blow to its witness for centuries. Darrell Guder advocates ecumenical exchange that promotes the “mutual conversion of Christian communities in diverse cultures,” and that “corrects, expands, and challenges all other forms of witness in the worldwide church.”¹⁶ I would add that my vision is to see this very “mutual conversion” happen within the life of the local congregation.

We must engage in an evangelism that not only promises the abundant life on earth, but prepares people to be in the eternal presence of God in heaven. The good news must supplant old idolatries. Race has been an idol in this country from the beginning, and its grip is still so powerful that White people feel compelled to worship in a White church, Black people feel com-

pelled to worship in a Black church, and Asian people feel compelled to worship in an Asian church. Will heaven be segregated like that? The thought is absurd. Heaven will surely be a multicultural place, with saints from all the nations worshipping God in unity. If the thought of a segregated heaven is absurd, then so is the reality of a segregated church. A monocultural church in a monocultural nation is understandable, but when we have the opportunity to become a multicultural church in the midst of a multicultural society, we must seize the opportunity. If we can do it, but choose not to do it, will it be counted as disobedience? When we have a Pentecostal situation, but refuse to create a Pentecostal church, will it be counted as unfaithfulness? Can we demonstrate that race, color, culture, language, and background are trivial obstacles before the Spirit of the Living One, before the God who has come to reconcile the whole world to himself? The Spirit of Pentecost is stirring in America. Can we catch the Spirit?



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Notes

- ¹ In advocating “kingdom growth” over church growth, Young-Gi Hong argues that, “the lack of a theology of kingdom growth has resulted in a negative model of growth: competition and monoculture.” Young-Gi Hong, “Revisiting Church Growth in Korean Protestantism,” *International Review of Mission*, April 2000, p.197.
- ² see Luke Timothy Johnson, *Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel* (Harper San Francisco, 1999), 101.
- ³ Darrell Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 79.
- ⁴ Guder, 69. Guder adds (p. 92), “All cultural formations of Christian discipleship are both authentic and sinful. They are shaped by God’s grace and deformed by our desire to control that grace.”
- ⁵ The battle can be described as one between an expansive gospel and a reduced gospel. Guder states (p. 102), “The reductionism we struggle with is related to our attempts to reduce the gospel, to bring it under control, to render it intellectually respectable, or to

make it serve another agenda than God’s purposes.”

⁶ As quoted in Guder, 87.

⁷ see Guder, 54.

⁸ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 390.

⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 37.

¹⁰ Robert Lupton states eloquently, “The Church is the only institution which, without irresponsibility, can expend all its resources on great and lavish outbursts of compassion. It is ordained to give itself away, yet without loss. The Church, above all earthly symbols, bears the responsibility of declaring in the outpouring of resources, the utter dependability of God. To preserve its life is to lose it.” Quoted in Philip D. Kenneson and James L. Street, *Selling Out the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 118.

¹¹ Psalm 23:5 (KJV), Phil. 2:17 (NRSV)

¹² Bosch, p. 392

¹³ see Brueggemann, p. 77.

¹⁴ Brueggemann warns (p. 88), “I believe the church in the United States faces a crisis of accommodation and compromise that is near to final evaporation.”

¹⁵ see Bosch, p. 321.

¹⁶ Guder, p. 90. He continues (p. 167), “The integrity of the incarnational witness of predominantly white American denominational churches is on the line when they address the multicultural reality of North America.”

War, Religion, and White Supremacy:

a South African Case Study

By Retief Müller

This article proceeds from the premise that the cultural identity of the white Afrikaners¹ of South Africa was profoundly influenced by the experience of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) in South Africa. The memory of this war, which was fought in the hope of securing national independence from the British Empire, continued to shape the collective imagination of the Afrikaner people through subsequent generations. It is specifically the way the collective memory of this war experience became mythologized that is at stake here. This article will also illustrate how Afrikaner Protestantism was deeply involved in the creation and Christian interpretation of cultural myths relating to this war experience.

The interrelationship of war, religion and group identity seems to be a highly significant, although perhaps under-researched, historical theme that applies to many contexts. For instance, in a comparative study of the English Civil War, the Spanish Civil War, and the American Civil War, Charles Reagan Wilson makes the statement that “religion’s overall role in these civil wars was to promote nationalism.”² Thus, even though people might have understood their faith to be something distinct from their cultural identity, the “cultural captivity” of churches was part and parcel of the war experience. This statement certainly also applies to the Afrikaner of South Africa. Since the idea of white supremacy, which is basically an ideologized version of racism, also strongly influenced the Afrikaner’s self-understanding the question would be: how did religion and white supremacy inform one another in Afrikaner South Africa in its post-war context? Thus, this study has three specific points of interest - race, religion, and war. It is, however, the interrelationship of these elements within the South African context that will be the main theme of this study.

Historical Background to the Anglo-Boer War

The Anglo-Boer War at the turn of the twentieth century in South Africa was the culmination of two hundred and fifty years of Afrikaner expansion and conflict with British and Africans.³

Afrikaner pre-history in Southern Africa commenced in 1652 when the Dutch East India Company

opened a shipping station at the Cape of Good Hope. At first this colony was poor. After the first fifty years there were not even two thousand white settlers. From the start they were outnumbered by their African and imported servants and slaves. The settlers were mainly Dutch Calvinists and some German Protestants and French Huguenot refugees. The poorest and most independent of these settlers were the *trekboers* (alias Boers), who were wandering farmers whose search for new grazing lands brought them ever deeper into African territory.

During the Napoleonic Wars, Britain took permanent possession of the colony in 1806. The aim was strategic, because the Cape was an important Naval base on the sea-route to India and the East. Since the colony was too poor and arid to attract many British immigrants, the Dutch remained the majority of the whites. Most of the latter were prepared to submit to rule by the British Crown, but a republican-minded minority, the Boers of the frontier, resented imperial interference, especially when it came to their ill treatment of the Africans. In 1834 Britain ordered the emancipation of slaves in every part of the Empire. This precipitated the Great Trek: the 1855-1877 exodus of about 5000 Boers (with about 5000 servants) across the Orange and Vaal rivers beyond the northeast frontiers of the colony. The *voortrekkers* (pioneers) had many quarrels among themselves, “but shared one article of faith: to deny political rights to Africans and Coloured people of mixed race.”⁴

For the next sixty years the British government had a difficult relationship with the Boers. In 1843, for instance, Britain created a second colony by annexing Natal, one of the areas in which the voortrekkers had settled. On the other hand, in 1852 and 1854 Britain recognized the independence of the two new Boer

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republics, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. However, in 1877 Britain annexed the Transvaal as the first step in an attempt to federate South Africa. This annexation was reversed in 1881, after the Boer leader Paul Kruger had led a rebellion (the First Boer War), which ended in the defeat of the British at Majuba. Thus, the Transvaal's independence was again restored, subject to certain conditions, including British supervision of its foreign policy.

Then in 1895 two multi-millionaires, Cecil Rhodes and Alfred Beit, conspired to take over the Transvaal for themselves and the Empire. By now two great mineral discoveries had changed the relative value of southern Africa in the eyes of the colonial powers. In 1870 began the diamond-rush to Kimberley on the borders of the Cape Colony. Diamonds not only helped the Colony attain successful self-government within the Empire, but also made Rhodes' and Beit's fortunes. Rhodes became Prime Minister at the Cape, and together he and Beit founded a new British colony in African territory to the north of the Transvaal, renamed Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe). In 1886 the gold rush to the Witwatersrand in the Transvaal began. Gold made the Transvaal the richest and militarily the most powerful nation in Southern Africa. However, it also made for the second time the fortunes of Rhodes and Beit. It also precipitated a collision between Boers and *Uitlanders* (new British immigrants attracted by

They understood themselves to be specifically chosen for something; in the words of this pastor, for the purpose of becoming a "separate people."

the prospect of gold) thus putting the *Uitlanders* in a unique position. Although they were believed to outnumber the Boers in the Transvaal, the latter kept them starved of political rights by means of a new franchise law that was much harsher than those of Britain or America. By 1895 the *Uitlanders'* political hunger coupled with the imperialistic ambitions of Beit and Rhodes seemed to offer the British the opportunity to once again take the Transvaal from the Boers. This led to the poorly organized and ultimately failed Jameson Raid of December 29, 1895. While the Raid was a failure the tensions that gave rise to it did not go away, but instead escalated in the four-year truce that followed.

With regard to the *Uitlander* question the British, backed by the threat of military force, continued to push for concessions to the point where Paul Kruger, the notoriously stubborn President of the Transvaal, felt he had no choice but to declare war on October 11, 1899. Thus, began the second Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902).

On War and Religion

A common theme that was present in Afrikaner religious thought during the Anglo-Boer War was the understanding of war as a ritual of consecration, as the following excerpt from a sermon preached by a Dutch Reformed minister illustrates:

"God led us into war; it is to chastise us, but he has His sacred goal... He will not let us perish, but will confirm us through this baptism of fire. The Lord Himself planted us in South Africa and let us flourish.... [Like Israel] we are going through the Red Sea, but it will make us into a separate people."⁵

In the theology of which this pastor is representative, we see a direct linkage between the Christian sacrament of Baptism, and the experience of fighting in war. Furthermore, within this scheme of things it is clear that the Afrikaner's group identity is intimately linked to Divine intention. They understood themselves to be specifically chosen for something; in the words of this pastor, for the purpose of becoming a "separate people."

Andre Du Toit gives a good account of how the linkage between Christianity and Afrikaner nationalism was forged. He describes how during a "series of political traumas" that started well before the actual outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War and continued in the years of instability thereafter, the Dutch Reformed Church gradually underwent a transition whereby they increasingly became a *volkskerk*.⁶

The term *volkskerk* literally translated means people's church, or even ethnic-church. Thus in Afrikanerdom the mutual support between Christianity and culture, which is sometimes designated by the term "civil religion," went a step further than in many other contexts. There appears to have been a complete blurring of boundaries not only between religion and culture, but perhaps even more significantly between religion and ethnicity. Therefore, Afrikaner Christianity was for all practical purposes a religion of and for a specific ethnic group.

What we have to remember at this point is the fact the Afrikaner not only considered themselves to be “separate” from the African population, but also from the British immigrants, and in fact all other immigrants. A contributing factor to this highly differentiated understanding of their identity is the fact that they spoke a different language from all the other immigrants. Therefore, while white Southerners in America, whose post-Civil War history in many respects show comparability with the Afrikaner, shared some characteristics with their white Northern counterparts, including language, a common Anglo-Saxon heritage, and the same religious traditions, the Afrikaner increasingly came to understand themselves as totally unrelated to the British settlers.

In South Africa, religion did not acquire the function of reconciliation or reunion among whites after the war, as it did in America in the wake of the Civil War. If anything, the identity of the Afrikaner as a “separate people” gained steam. Du Toit says that the representative churches of the opposing parties became increasingly polarized: “the Dutch Reformed church and the Anglican Church, which prior to the war had maintained close and cordial relations that at one point had led almost to church unity, drifted irrevocably apart as each identified with one of the two parties in the war.”⁷ In the postwar years as the Dutch Reformed church increasingly became involved with Afrikaner nationalism, poor relations with the “English” churches continued to be the *status quo*. An example of how Afrikaner and English churches continued to drift apart could be seen in the fact that in the 1920’s the *volkskerk*, which had been deeply involved in general education since before the war, now became a strong advocate for exclusively *Afrikaans* education.⁸

On White Supremacy

In his book *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History*, George M. Fredrickson states that more than other societies that arose in the wake of European colonial expansion, South Africa and the Southern United States “have manifested over long periods of time a tendency to push the principle of differentiation by race to its logical outcome – a kind of *Herrenvolk* society in which people of color, however numerous or acculturated they may be, are treated as permanent aliens or outsiders.”⁹

In the South African case this attitude stretched back to the frontier life-style of their predecessors the

voortrekkers. It was similar to the conviction prevalent in the Old South that whites had an “inherent right” to rule it over dark skinned people, “but unlike southern secessionists, the voortrekkers had no commitment to slavery as the only effective means of racial control... what they wanted was *de facto* power rather than a slave code.”¹⁰ According to Fredrickson, describing the difference between the two racial points of view basically requires “juxtaposing a highly developed and relatively sophisticated ideology with a set of communal beliefs that barely reached the level of articulate expression.”¹¹

There are two basic reasons why these Boer ancestors on the South African frontier did not articulate a racist ideology to support their beliefs. Firstly, their generally low level of education and even basic literacy effectively prohibited them from doing so, but secondly, even had they been highly educated, they still would have had no urgent motive to take such a step. While Southern secessionists had to justify their practices to a wider context of strong opposition, for the Boers “it was usually enough to rely on the common white perception that Africans were actual or potential enemies and so clearly alien in culture and habits that the idea of assimilating them into white society was unthinkable.”¹² A major reason why this “common white perception” could persist unchallenged is the fact that unlike the Southern United States context, in southern Africa Africans vastly outnumbered whites.¹³ Furthermore, even when they identified themselves with the Biblical Israelites, the Boers were conscious of the fact that they were invaders of land occupied by Africans. They were the intruders and their very presence in the land spelled conflict with the Africans. While slavery could be abolished in the American South without completely jeopardizing the *status quo* of white rule, white supremacy was always in a precarious position in South Africa due to whites’ numerical minority status.

Despite the fact that emancipation of slaves in the Southern States posed no direct threat to white rule, it did, of course, create the potential for some major changes in terms of the economic and social order. Therefore, new methods of control were subsequently invented. While the South African and American roads to reunion after the two wars were in many ways different, Fredrickson says, “it was similar in its ultimate betrayal of black hopes and aspirations.”¹⁴

As described above there was no question from the white South African point of view that the Africans

had to be ruled. There was, however, a difference of opinion between the British and the Boers on how that should be done. While the British had a trusteeship policy that promised the protection of conquered African tribes that allowed them to retain much of their original territory, the Boers had a system called: “*Baaskap* – which in essence meant direct domination in the interest of white settlers without any pretense that the subordinate race was being shielded from exploitation or guided toward civilization.”¹⁵ While the major British grievance, and main incentive for the Anglo-Boer War, was the denial of political rights to British immigrants who had poured into the Witwatersrand after the discovery of gold in 1886, “British protests and propaganda directed at the Transvaal in the 1890s sometimes used accusations of the mistreatment of Africans and, more particularly, of discrimination against nonwhite British subjects (Cape Coloreds and Indian immigrants) to strengthen a case that republican independence was an affront to Anglo-Saxon principles of justice and equality.”¹⁶

However, when Britain won the war and the two Boer republics for a brief period became Crown Colonies, “no serious efforts were made to reform or modify the pre-existing policies of racial proscription; and when both colonies were granted responsible self-government in 1907, the whites-only franchise remained in effect.”¹⁷

In the South African case there was no illusion that blacks would be put under a form of “apprenticeship” or “benevolent guidance” that would lead to their eventual political equality. This was very different from the American scenario. However, the British government’s “hasty retreat from earlier commitments to equal rights... strongly resembles the North’s failure to enforce black suffrage and civil rights in the South after Reconstruction.”¹⁸ Describing the South African situation John W. Cell puts it as follows:

Peace, however, did not entrench “liberal” British values. Instead, beginning with the treaty of Vereeniging, which pledged that an African franchise would not be a necessary condition for full self-government in the Afrikaner republics, it compromised them. Peace meant not increased protection and a widening role for loyal Africans but appeasement of the rebellious Afrikaners.¹⁹

Thus, not only did the British neglect their promises to the Africans, they all but handed power back to the

Boers when, after bringing the two rebel republics back under the umbrella of the Empire by means of the Act of Union that was passed in the British Parliament in 1907, power was transferred to the autonomous Union of South Africa in 1910. In other words the entire area of white settlement, which included the colonies of Natal and the Cape, were brought under one rule, which were then quickly granted self-government on the model of other colonies like Canada or Australia. The Boers were now united with their fellow Dutch speakers in other parts of South Africa and together this group that would increasingly become known as the Afrikaner formed the majority of the South African whites. For this reason, the first elected prime minister of the Union was an Afrikaner, General Louis Botha, who also happened to be a celebrated hero of the Boer War.²⁰

Therefore, that the Afrikaner’s had lost the war did not mean a loss of their cultural ambition. In fact, something very different was afoot:

For practical purposes, the Union of South Africa that emerged from a constitutional convention in 1910 was an independent nation. Although they had lost the war, the Afrikaners had in effect won the peace; for they remained a majority of the total white population and had the potential capacity, if they could mobilize themselves politically, to establish their ethnic hegemony.²¹

From this perspective, the Afrikaner war experience actually really formed the beginning of their cultural formation. Their lost war did not precipitate a lost cause. The lost war did, however, help to shape the nature of the cause that was in the process of becoming. Furthermore, after the British victory had unified South Africa and the way had been opened to a free expansion of their capitalist interests, “they found it expedient to give the white inhabitants of the ex-Republics a free hand to rule over blacks more or less according to the settlers’ own traditions.”²²

An important difference between South Africa and the American South was that after 1910 the former was a sovereign state. While its economy for long thereafter remained structurally linked to that of Britain, Cell points out that this was not to the same extent that the South’s was linked to the North’s in America. Apart from the fact that the white population in South Africa was a minority, they were also ethnically divided

between Afrikaners and English speakers. What the two contexts did have in common, however, is that both were “white man’s countries that had inherited largely vertical patterns of white supremacy, but that developed the primarily horizontal system of segregation as a means of controlling the impact of urbanization and industrialization.”²³

Another distinctive feature between the two contexts that Cell reminds us of is the fact that development of segregation in South Africa was more or less a decade behind America, which allowed the former to learn from the latter. There is some clear evidence that South Africans studied the American experiment closely.²⁴ While white South Africans were impressed with the pace at which “an African people, albeit one with the ‘advantage’ of having been schooled in slavery, might become useful, disciplined workers and consumers in an expanding and increasingly sophisticated economy,” they were also “appalled by the chronic, explosive violence of the American scene.”²⁵ Referring to the Southern white churches’ support of slavery Maurice Evans wrote in 1915:

To-day there are their descendants, Christian ministers who condone if they do not approve lynching, and who turn to the Scripture to prove that the Negro is, and always will be, an inferior, and attempt thus to justify discrimination and repression.²⁶

Describing some of the alleged reasons for the prevalence of lynching in the South, Evans cites the practice of carrying weapons in many areas. However, he then states: “[W]e in South Africa are accustomed to firearms, have during the past forty years used them in legitimate warfare far oftener than the Southern people, and yet homicide is not a favourite pastime with either Dutch or English.”²⁷ Perhaps he is overstating the case, perhaps he is suffering from a case of patriotic blindness to atrocities in his own context, but on the other hand this might be a true difference of serious significance. The fact is that no movement comparable to the Ku Klux Klan emerged in South Africa in the post-war years. One could, of course, argue that such an organization would have been superfluous since the South African police fulfilled their role in the South African context.

Yet, while Evans writes in the post-war era in South Africa, Thomas Pakenham makes it clear that during the war years it was the African population that were actually the biggest losers of all. The idea that the

Boer War was a “gentleman’s war” and a “white man’s war” is a complete misconception. While Africans were officially absent from both Boer and British armies, up to a “hundred thousand” were enrolled to serve both sides as laborers, drivers, guides, etc. Furthermore: “Many non-combatants were flogged by the Boers or shot.” When the British, who at one point were under siege at a town called Mafeking, eventually prevailed the British commander, Baden-Powell, issued orders by which more than two thousand of the African garrison “were shot by the Boers or left by Baden-Powell to die of starvation. In general it was the Africans who had to pay the heaviest price in the war and its aftermath.”²⁸

While Evans’ confident statement, fifteen years later, that “homicide is not a favourite pastime with either Dutch or English” was in all probability an honest opinion, it is perhaps also a good example of how some details could conveniently get lost in the telling of history. As such we have a romantic recreation of the past, rather than an authentic account of what actually happened. This is where history enters the arena of mythology, a process that occurred often enough in the post-war years in South Africa.

The Role of Religious/Cultural Mythology in White Supremacy

In order to understand the role of the pre- Boer War history in the mythology of Afrikaner religion the following assessment by Robert Hamerton-Kelly is helpful:

Afrikaner group identity was forged between the hammer of British imperialism and the anvil of black resistance. It contains two powerful motivating forces: the sense of being a victim of injustice and arrogance – in this case at the hands of the British – and the exhilaration of being the victor over unfavorable odds – in this instance over the superior numbers of the blacks in battle.²⁹

Hamerton-Kelly elaborates on this assessment by naming the two poles of the Afrikaner national myth: “the 1816 rebellion in Cape Colony at Slagtersnek (or Slachter’s Nek), which is the victimization pole, and the three-hour ‘Battle of Blood River’ (on the Ncome River in Zululand) on December 16, 1838, which is the victory pole.”³⁰

The Slagtersnek episode went something as follows: in 1816 the British authorities in the Cape Colony hung five Boers at a place in the Eastern Cape called

Vanaardtspos for having led an armed rebellion. The reason for the rebellion was that the authorities had sent out a force of blacks to arrest a white man. While this racist rationale went unquestioned by either the British or the Boer versions of the event, the mythmakers would later effectively employ it. Hamerton-Kelly

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writes, “The historical details show that the episode was typically ambiguous, but the mythical retelling turned it into an unambiguous instance of British tyranny, exemplified by the fact that the ropes broke in four of the five cases, but the execution went on nevertheless and each of the four survivors was hanged seriatim from the one sound rope.”³¹

The victory pole, Blood River, provided a firm grounding for the white supremacist element in 20th century Afrikaner mythology. On December 16, 1838, a commando of 468 Boers led by Andries Pretorius defeated a Zulu army of approximately ten thousand strong on the banks of the Ncome River in Natal. The Zulus left three thousand on the field of battle, while only three Boers suffered minor wounds. The Boers renamed the river Blood River, because the water had a reddish taint caused by the blood of the fallen after the battle.³²

Before the commencement of the battle, this group of Boers had made a “Covenant” with God that if they were victorious they would commemorate that date every year in the future as a special day. According to Du Toit the commemoration of this day almost immediately fell into disuse until 1881 when it “reentered public discourse at a national level.”³³ From then on the Covenant, interpreted as a sign that God is on the side of the Boers, increasingly gained importance, and eventually “would become one of the central institutions in the civil religion of modern Afrikaner nationalism, reaching it apogee in the 1930s.”³⁴

After the Anglo-Boer War the Boers would increasingly become known as the Afrikaners. Whereas the term Boer specifically designated the descendents of those who took part in the Great Trek, the term

Afrikaner was more inclusive of all Dutch-speaking South Africans, and with the unification of the different colonies such an extension of group identity became a powerful political strategy.

Within the context of their self-understanding of simultaneously being victim and victor, Afrikaner nationalism quickly rose to the occasion. So did the language that would become known as Afrikaans. Although it is basically a simplified version of Dutch it achieved higher status when the Bible was translated into Afrikaans. A young Calvinist theologian, J.D. Du Toit (Totius) was primarily responsible for this and other linguistic ventures. Apart from being a Professor of Theology at the Reformed Church’s Seminary in Potchefstroom, he was leader of the First Language Movement and the most renowned poet of his time. He more than anyone was responsible for the creation of the national mythology. Irving Hexham says that he and his contemporaries, “simultaneously created their myth and the written language in which that myth was enshrined.”³⁵

One of Totius most famous poems *Vergewe en Vergeet* (Forgive and Forget) tells the story of a young thorn tree growing beside a road. One day a large wagon appears and one of its wheels overruns the small tree bending it low and severely damaging it. The tree is not uprooted and in time begins to grow again. As it does so, the scar caused by the wagon remains and, with the passing of time, although the wound heals, the scar grows. The poem has a clear message. The thorn tree represents the Afrikaner People and the wagon the British Empire. “After all they had experienced at the hand of the British, Afrikaners could never *forgive and forget*.”³⁶

In his article *Afrikaner Civil Religion and the Current South African Crisis*, David Bosch interprets the poem *Besembos*, by Totius. The *Besembos* is a hardy and resilient semi-desert weed, which Totius makes the symbol of the Afrikaner people. The *Besembos* flourishes where most other stronger plants would die. Even if you burn it down it just sprouts forth anew and flourishes as before. Bosch states:

These and other poems became a lens through which Afrikaners were looking upon their past. They conveyed to generations of Afrikaners the notion that they are there to stay, that they are irrevocably part and parcel of the soil of Africa, of the veld and the mountains and the rivers, and that no earthly force would ever succeed in subduing them, let alone routing them.³⁷

Totius also made rich use of his biblical knowledge to draw comparisons between Israel and the Afrikaner. His poems are filled with references to the Afrikaner people as the suffering servants of God. *Potgieter's Trek* describes one aspect of the Great Trek as an epic pilgrimage filled with much hardship, making the connection with Israel's exodus from Egypt. Hexham makes the following comments about this poem and thereby cuts to the core of Afrikaner religious self understanding:

Like Israel, and following the example of Christ Himself, the Afrikaner People achieve salvation through suffering. Totius' poem is therefore a psalm to national deliverance, an interpretation of history that makes the past bearable. The irrational pattern of past events fits into a divine scheme, which removes their arbitrary appearance and eternally legitimates them.³⁸

It is quite ironic that they, who considered themselves the suffering servants of God, the victims of British injustices, could conveniently forget that they were in reality the real oppressors, the ones responsible for the greatest amount of suffering in South Africa. The fact that this could happen would not make sense without an understanding of the powerful role played by religion in the formation of Afrikaner identity. As was the case in the American South, we can clearly discern a strong cultural subtext that not only co-existed with, but also actually informed Afrikaner interpretation of Scripture. In the imagination of the people these two "texts," perhaps inevitably, became merged into one, evolving into a cultural mythology of redemptive suffering, chosenness, and Divine destiny.

Synthesis

According to David Blight: "The study of historical memory might be defined, therefore, as the study of cultural struggle, of contested truths, interpretations, moments, events, epochs, rituals, or even texts in history that thresh out rival versions of the past that are in turn put to the service of the present."³⁹ In other words, with historical memory it is often the present that sets the agenda of what the past should look like. Moreover, this version of the past is then perceived to have a certain value, whether that is as a legitimization for the preservation of the *status quo*, or as a prescriptive model for how and when change should occur. It is the value that is attributed to a specific version of his-

tory that could elevate it to the plane of sacred history. When such a sacred history becomes the official or dominant history it often takes on a totalitarian nature,

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making every conceivable effort to discredit other versions of the same history. The Afrikaners of South Africa had such a sacred history, and as is generally the case with such 'histories' the 'historians' themselves were the protagonists in the story.

Afrikaner sacred history found its legitimacy in the Day of the Covenant, described above, and its ritual annual celebration. In the historical clash of the black Zulu and the white Afrikaner, it was believed that God had proven himself to be on the side of the Afrikaner. Whereas the American South might have had a "God ordained" social order, the Afrikaner considered themselves to be an ordained people. The social order might change, but the Afrikaner as a people would not lose their identity. Since their identity depended on their continued victory over the black majority, they realized that they also had to control the social order, hence the need for a comprehensive political system to achieve that. This desire resulted in the elaborate system of Apartheid. Therefore, unlike the situation in the American South where Jim Crow laws were aimed at recreating the antebellum social order as far as possible, the intention with Apartheid was not so much preserving the past, but rather insuring the future.

When a Judeo-Christian people creates a sacred history it is perhaps inevitable that they will strongly identify with the Biblical Israel, especially when they understand themselves to be suffering for a cause. The hardships that the Afrikaner suffered during the Great Trek and the military defeat at the hands of the British in the Anglo-Boer War was correlated to the hardships suffered by Israel during their forty years stint in the Wilderness following the Exodus. All these chastisements were necessary preparations before the long-awaited entrance into the land "Canaan" could occur. For the Afrikaner Canaan finally became a reality when

after the institution of Apartheid the “heathen” black tribes could, according to the homelands act, be forcibly removed to their designated “home” areas.

Perhaps this is a good place to re-evaluate the symbolic significance of the Afrikaner “baptism of fire,” which they had achieved through their war experience, because it seems to have been strangely prophetic in the light of what eventually happened. We noted earlier that the Afrikaner ‘baptism’ had the eventual goal of consecrating them into a “separate people.” History shows the evidence that the Afrikaner did in fact become a separate people; so separate that for more than forty years during the era of institutionalized Apartheid (1948- early 1990s) they successfully isolated and insulated themselves from a rising tide of negative world opinion.

White supremacy was the cornerstone on which South African society rested. The Afrikaner’s goal, separateness, although not easy to achieve within the plural African context, was relatively uncomplicated. All they had to do was convince themselves of their own chosenness while at the same time be scared enough of the very real possibility that the African masses might rise up in vengeance against their oppressors. The proverbial circling of the wagons was virtually a foregone conclusion. Racism inspired by fear was the fuel on which Afrikaner civil religion thrived. Afrikaner white supremacy was deeply rooted in the insecurities brought about by the knowledge of the precarious nature of their identity as the only white tribe in Africa. Therefore, this version of white supremacy was not apologetic, nor was it camouflaged as something else. From their point of view, they were the embattled protectors and legitimate representatives of Christianity and “Civilization” in darkest Africa.

Conclusion

A theologically minded individual, who reads this, may perhaps feel dissatisfied with the stark lack of anything positive in this portrayal. Why isn’t there any mention of the witnesses who proclaimed the truth of the Gospel over against the South African situation? After all, all white South African Christians were clearly not complicit in the system of Apartheid. There were those who sacrificed their careers, their freedom, even their lives for the sake of their opposition to Apartheid. And of course, no account of Afrikaner Christianity in the twentieth century would be complete without mentioning prophets like Beyers Naude and David Bosch. The problem is, however, that our natural inclination to focus our attention on the more hopeful and prophetic

responses by the dissenters like Bosch and Naude, often obscures the unpleasant reality that these theological and cultural dissenters were few and far between,⁴⁰ and that the mainstream of Afrikaner Protestantism were solidly captivated within the Apartheid cultural and civil religious discourse.

Therefore, if the thrust of this study seems negative and uninspiring we should perhaps remind ourselves that the prophets have always, in all times and in all contexts, been in the minority. The story of the majority is the story of those who are less heroic, less willing to leave the comfortable cultural cocoon of complacency and silent complicity. Yet, it is precisely in a situation as depressing and seemingly hopeless as the one described above where the prophet’s message is the

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most relevant. Again, David Bosch is an example to us. In 1986, six years before his own untimely death, and eight years prior to the final demise of Apartheid with the election of South Africa’s first ever black majority government, Bosch wrote an article in which he analyzed and deconstructed the Afrikaner Apartheid theology which still solidly ruled the day at the time of his writing. While acknowledging that the situation had the makings of a classical Greek tragedy, Bosch concludes his article by stating that as a believer and follower in the Judeo-Christian tradition he is an anti-tragedy person:

I am in the hope business. I know of judgment, which is not the same as tragedy. I also know of repentance and forgiveness, or reparation and restitution, of a new life beyond the grave, of a kingdom which is coming. And, of course, I am not alone in this.... The night is dark, but there have always been and there still are the watchmen crying out their messages of hope, reminding us that when the night is at its darkest, dawn draws near.⁴¹

Finally, one has to ask the inevitable question regarding the cross-cultural implications of this for the United States context. As mentioned at various

instances throughout this article, it is of course no secret that white supremacy ruled the day in the American South for much of its history. It is also no secret that white Protestant Christianity in many ways played along with that theme. There was a time when Southern Christians used the Bible to justify slavery, and in the wake of the Civil War during the period of Reconstruction the “Cult of the Lost Cause” became a prominent theme in Protestant Christian discourse with the aim of recreating the antebellum social order.⁴² This was in many ways politically achieved through the creation of Jim Crow laws. A persuasive case has, in fact, been made that the South in many ways regained the initiative by convincing the North of their way of thinking during and after the period of Reconstruction.⁴³

Yet, all of that is now safely buried in the annals of history, isn't it? After all, the political and social victories of the Civil Rights Movement once and for all ended white supremacy. The problem is, however, that when you are numerically in the majority there are many more subtle ways to keep the cultural (and religious) Other in a position of subjugation than through open measures of control. In other words, when segregation is ended, and when the question of who sits where on buses is no longer a matter of contention, we should be wary of not being lulled into the belief that the white supremacy of the mind has also been erased. It should be remembered that while the system of Apartheid in South Africa was much harsher than segregation in North America, it was simultaneously much more precarious, because it concerned the subjugation of a black majority by a rather small, yet materially privileged white minority. Therefore, when it came to an end the formerly oppressed majority gained the political upper hand. In North America on the other hand, whites are simultaneously in the majority as well as being more economically privileged. This seems to suggest the possibility that white supremacist ideology could continue to have a strong influence in this context without ever feeling the need to raise its head above the surface.

The fact that in the recent past a political figure as influential as the Senate Majority leader would think it a good idea to make affirmative statements regarding someone who, at the time of reference, was pro-segregation should serve as a warning. The fact that Trent Lott lost his job as a result of his statements regarding Strom Thurmond affirms the fact that white supremacy may not be openly voiced, even in the most guarded

terms. But numerous questions remain. How influential are covert forms of white supremacy in American politics and culture? If the assumption that it remains as a force is accurate, does white Protestantism continue to play a role? Is it of significance that the Southern white evangelical power base seems to be increasingly influential in the political arena? Is this movement quite simply the result of a good intentioned wish to reintroduce ‘Christian values’ into the public square, or is it possible that some other, less benign forces have become co-opted within it? Or are these questions too dangerous to ask?

It would seem that we are in a time when the powers that be continue to portray a picture of blissful race relations through the channels of public discourse. Yet, it is exactly in times like these that Christian theology is called upon to recognize the iron fist inside the silk glove. Indeed, Christian theology has a role in the public square, but perhaps that role is less that of cheering and applause for everything that is said and done in the name of Christianity. Perhaps that role should take a more critical, more prophetic, stance. That role would require us to discern that white supremacy may still be alive and well today, even if the lines of division, of who the dehumanized Other is, could very well have shifted. For instance, when we find ourselves in the midst of a declared ‘War on Terrorism’ a good question would perhaps be this: is it possible that the flipside of the coin is an undeclared war on Islam, perhaps even an undeclared, maybe even subconscious, war on people of Arab decent? These are difficult issues for us to wrestle with at this equally difficult point in history. However, any authentic engagement of these issues demands critical reflection both for our sake and for the sake for the Other among us.



Notes

¹ This group of people of mainly Dutch descent is often designated by the term Boers (literally translated it means *farmers*). However, the term Afrikaner is more accurately used in conjunction with the period after the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899, when most Dutch speaking people in southern Africa identified themselves with the cause of the Boer republics – the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. This awareness of identity eventually gave rise to “Afrikaner Nationalism,” which became the driving force behind the political ideology of Apartheid that ruled in South

Africa through much of the twentieth century. See Irving Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid: The Struggle for National Independence of Afrikaner Calvinism against British Imperialism* (New York and Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1981), 6.

² Charles Reagan Wilson, "Religion and the American Civil War in Comparative Perspective," in *Religion and the American Civil War*, eds. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout, and Charles Reagan Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 400.

³ For this section see Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (New York: Random House, 1979), xiii- xiv.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xiii.

⁵ Pastoral letter "To our beloved Brethren, the Burghers on Commando," *De Fakkkel* (February 1900.) Quoted in André Du Toit, "The Construction of Afrikaner Chosenness," in *Many are Chosen: Divine Election and Western Nationalism*, eds. William R. Hutchison and Hartmut Lehmann (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 136.

⁶ Du Toit, 130.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁸ See T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 69-71.

⁹ George M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), xi-xii.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 171-72.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹² *Ibid.*, 178.

¹³ According to John W. Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982): "In the American South the ratio of white to black was roughly 2 to 1. In South Africa it was no better than 1 to 3" (194). This is, of course, a somewhat sweeping generalization. Cf. Fredrickson who states: "there have been many times and places in South African history where the ratio of white to nonwhite in the areas under direct European rule was not so different from that in parts of the United States, particularly the Deep South" (xxii). On the other hand, he concedes: "The ratio of white settler to indigenous nonwhite population is such an obvious

and enormously significant difference between the American and South African situations as they developed historically that it can never be disregarded (xxi).

¹⁴ Fredrickson, 191.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹⁹ Cell, 266.

²⁰ See Cell, 61.

²¹ Fredrickson, 138.

²² *Ibid.*, 139.

²³ Cell, 160-161.

²⁴ Among other South African scholars, Maurice S. Evans made an extensive study in the Southern States of what he termed "the problem of the Twentieth Century... the problem of the colour line." His findings were published in a 299-page scholarly work: *Black and White in the Southern States: a study of the race problem in the United States from a South African point of view* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1915).

²⁵ Cell, 193.

²⁶ Evans, 67.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

²⁸ Pakenham, xxi.

²⁹ Robert Hamerton-Kelly, "Biblical Justification of Apartheid in Afrikaner Civil Religion," in *Critical Moments in Religious History*, Edited with an introduction by Kenneth Keulman (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1993,) 161.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 161.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 162.

³² *Ibid.*, 165.

³³ Du Toit, 132.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 131.

³⁵ Hexham, 33.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁷ David J. Bosch, "Afrikaner Civil Religion and the Current South African Crisis," *Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review* 20:2 (1988), 16.

³⁸ Hexham, 41.

³⁹ David W. Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory, and the American Civil War*, (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 120-121.

⁴⁰ See Jaap Durand, "Afrikaner piety and dissent," in *Resistance and Hope: South African essays in honour of Beyers Naude*, eds. Charles Villa-Vicencio and John W. De Gruchy (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 39-51.

⁴¹ David J. Bosch, "The Afrikaner and South Africa," *Theology Today* 43:2 (1986), 215-16.

⁴² See for instance, Charles Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980).

⁴³ David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), has made the argument that the North and the South had achieved a reunion during this period, a reunion based on the acceptance of Southern terms. Ironically, it became solidified as a "politically completed fact" with the help of another war, the Spanish-American War of 1898. According to Blight there were some Southern "values in search of a history" that became generally accepted after the reunion. These were, "White supremacy, a hardening of traditional gender roles, a military tradition and patriotic recognition of Confederate valor, and a South innocent of responsibility for slavery..." (291).

Second Generation, Asian-American Evangelicals

By Erica Liu Elsdon

The word Asian is a broad term that is often used by white Americans to describe people who they believe come from the vast continent of Asia. More specifically, it is usually directed at people whose physical features include black hair, almond shaped eyes, and flesh that has slightly yellow undertones. However, this monolithic term has much diversity in reality. This paper will focus upon people who identify themselves as second generation, Asian-American evangelicals. By second generation I mean people whose parents emigrated from an Asian country, but themselves were born and grew up in America. I use the term Asian-American, but this is not accurate as I will not be addressing the many groups which make up "Asia." Primarily I mean East Asian, which includes Chinese-American, Taiwanese-American, Korean-American, and Japanese-American. Finally, the term evangelical refers to Christians who hold a more authoritative view of the Bible and an understanding of their faith which drives them to proselytize others. I will first outline a brief history, then discuss the specific contextual variables of this group, and finally explore what a second generation, Asian-American, evangelical interpretation of the Christian faith means.

History

When one thinks of the term "evangelical," normally the image that comes to mind is a white American. How is it that second generation, Asian-Americans have come to identify themselves with this group of people? The starting point of Asian American history is often traced back to the Chinese laborers who built the transcontinental railroad in the nineteenth century. The Chinese population during this time was almost exclusively male, as women were not allowed to enter the United States. Christian missionary efforts targeted these Chinese men because they felt their moral situation was in dire need of help. "[T]he missions sought to impose a moral influence on the Asian immigrant bachelor societies, which lacked proper family homes and bred gambling, drinking, and prostitution" (Chen, Jeung, 233). As increasing numbers of Asian immigrants came to the United States (mainly Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino), Protestant missions

upped their efforts towards evangelizing them not only into the Christian faith, but also into American life. As Chen and Jeung note,

Historically, missionary efforts by Christians with Asians in America have sought to convert souls, and to "Americanize" and "civilize" immigrants as well. Fumitaka Matsuoka argues, "To become Christian, to a certain extent, was to become American. To be American was to become Christian. This was true particularly in the early days of the Asian immigration to the U.S....Asian Americans then viewed the churches as a major route and catalyst towards assimilation" (232-233).

Thus the impact of evangelical Christianity had an early start upon Asian Americans as they sought to convert the souls of Asian people. Sucheng Chan notes that Presbyterian efforts made by missionaries such as William Speer, who had served in China, were well received by the Chinese in California (73).

In addition to the efforts in the United States to evangelize Asian Americans, Christian missionaries went abroad to bring the gospel to Asians. After cheap labor became unnecessary, anti-Asian sentiment became more intense and laws were passed by the U.S. government which not only discriminated against Asian Americans but prevented Asian immigrants from entering. However, this did not deter the missionaries as they created societies which sent them into China, Korea, and Taiwan. The impact that these missionaries had upon later Asian immigrants is discussed by Rudy Busto as he reiterates the work of Karl Fung:

These conservative evangelical immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan, Fung observes, came out of a history of intense conservative Christian foreign mission work and were strongly attached to the "absolute authority and

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clear direction” of evangelicalism in the wake of massive social upheaval after the communist takeover of China in 1949 (136).

Therefore evangelicals hit Asians on both sides of the Pacific Ocean as they proselytized the Asians living in the United States as well as the homelands of Asians. Organizations such as Campus Crusade for Christ held “blitzes” on nations like Korea (Explo ’74) in which they evangelized masses of people, the results of which can be seen both in South Korea as well as in the Korean communities in the United States today (Busto,136).

The other important historical change which also must be noted is the opening of U.S. doors to Asian immigration in 1965. Carrie Chang states,

Following the 1965 Immigration Repeals Act, the number of Asians arriving from countries such as Korea, the Philippines and Taiwan, countries with the highest Christian missionary activity worldwide in the ‘60s, rose sharply. By 1985, these groups accounted for as many as five million, or 2.1% of the U.S. population (Chang).

The number of Asians in the United States has increased dramatically even since 1985, as they now account for 3.6% of the total population and are one of the most rapidly growing groups (U.S. Census 2000). One of the most obvious places where Asians have entered is American institutions of higher learning. Busto notes that the number of Asian Americans on college campuses tripled from 1976-1986 (135). The University of California at Berkeley has an Asian undergraduate population of 42.9% (according to statistics of undergraduates in Fall 2002) and many students jokingly call the University of California at Irvine (UCI), the University of Chinese Immigrants. The stereotype of Asian students at Ivy League schools has some truth to it, as more and more of them gain admission and obtain degrees from schools such as Harvard and Yale.

The increasing number of Asian Americans on university campuses has been noted by many groups, including evangelical Christian organizations such as InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) and Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC). In fact, these groups have acknowledged their efforts to target Asian American college students. During the 1970s, both IVCF and CCC created programs that specifically reached out to

Asian American students, and were largely successful (Busto,135). Chang states,

At Yale, the Campus Crusade for Christ, which was 100 percent white in the ‘80s, is now 90 percent Asian. The InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at Stanford has become almost totally Asian, while at Harvard it is increasingly common to spot T-shirts proudly emblazoned with “The Asian Awakening.” On many campuses, Asian Christian gatherings have even become a standard part of the undergraduate social experience (Chang).

Not only have evangelical groups succeeded in bringing Asian Americans into their fold, but they have made them into one of their strongest groups of evangelizers. Chang notes that, “Asian American students

The model minority myth heavily impacts second generation Asian Americans, as they struggle to establish an identity that encompasses both Asian and American values.

have become the targets of choice for Christian missionaries of all stripes.” IVCF hosts a mission conference every three years called Urbana, which focuses solely on encouraging college students to become missionaries and evangelizers. When it started in 1946, there were few Asian American students in attendance, but in 2000, 5067 Asian students (26.9% of the total) were counted. Not only that, but the main Bible expositor was a third generation, Chinese-American pastor, Dr. Ken Fong. In a conversation I had with Dr. Fong, he told me that IVCF wants to become the foremost publisher on Asian American Christian literature. The success which evangelical Christianity has had amongst Asian American college students can be seen by the sheer number of Asian Christian associations which exist on campuses (Berkeley has 64 according to Chang).

With this brief background, it is clear that the missionary efforts by white evangelicals had a large role in converting Asian Americans into Christians. The question remains though, about why many of these Asian Americans have so readily identified themselves with evangelical ideology. To this question we turn to next as we explore the contextual variables of second generation, Asian-American evangelicals.

Contextual Variables

The two areas which most impact Asian American identification with evangelical ethos seem to be the role of race/identity issues and Asian cultural practices. The model minority myth heavily impacts second generation Asian Americans, as they struggle to establish an identity that encompasses both Asian and American

The racial landscape of America is largely understood in black and white terms, often leaving Asian Americans confused about their place in society.

values. Confucianism and the high pressures they experience from family also play into the easily adopted evangelical identity. As we will see, often second generation, Asian Americans claim “Christian” as the most important identity, and do not speak about race/ethnicity despite their mono-ethnic, Christian fellowships and churches.

The model minority stereotype used to describe Asian Americans grows from the perception that all Asians are doing exceedingly well not only in school, but in the economic realms as well. This stereotype ignores the statistics which show that all Asian Americans do not occupy this space, but in fact are some of the poorest people in the United States. However, regardless of economic status, Asian Americans are often typecast as the straight ‘A’ students who get into prestigious colleges and then move on to lucrative careers as engineers, doctors, or lawyers. They are seen as the model minority because they have managed to achieve the “American dream.” In reality, they are used as a buffer zone between whites and other minorities. However, this does not mean that Asian Americans totally reject the model minority myth. Some embrace it knowingly and unknowingly, as they continue to operate under the high and narrow expectations of their families and society. The pressure for them to “succeed” cannot be underestimated as second generation, Asian Americans are driven by their parents and the model minority myth.

To understand the context of a second generation, Asian American person, one must also consider his/her background. With immigrant parents from East Asian nations, there are elements of Confucianism at play. The emphasis upon harmony in relationships is based

upon the foundation of proper roles. In the Chinese language, each person in the family has a distinct term depending upon their position (male, female, age, father’s side, etc). For example, the word for your aunt who is your father’s youngest sister would be distinct from the word for your aunt who is your mother’s oldest sister. This understanding of proper relationships is deeply embedded in East Asian cultures, and can be seen in the lives of second generation, Asian American evangelicals. Busto quotes one Asian American evangelical as stating,

Many Confucian ideas are similar to Christian ideals—like honoring your parents, living a moral, virtuous life, and working hard...Asian culture has it embedded that you are supposed to give respect to older people (139-140).

The focus upon proper relationships may be a reason why Asian Americans often eagerly try to assimilate, to ensure harmony. The Confucian hierarchy of relationships is also easily seen in Asian American churches, where the elders often rule.

Another factor to consider is the issue of identity for Asian Americans. Second generation people often describe their experiences in the U.S. as not really fitting in either Asian or American culture. The racial landscape of America is largely understood in black and white terms, often leaving Asian Americans confused about their place in society. In addition, being bicultural people, Asian Americans struggle to integrate two cultures into their identity, or sometimes try to be only one or the other. Racial and identity politics are often avoided by Asian American evangelicals, and instead a “Christian” identity is espoused. In talking about the struggles for Asian Americans to define their identity, Chang describes why evangelical Christianity is often embraced.

The bland stereotype (model minority) fails to capture the emotional wreck resulting from a largely immigrant population in flux, a population whose rate of mental illness is one of the highest in the nation. Fringe movements, such as campus fundamentalism, thrive on the unaddressed issues of the ignored, and it is no wonder psychological fears of academic failure, of pained invisibility in a driven, socially disjointed environment, would be assuaged by the gospel of universal love, in a religious fellowship that promises to dissolve temporal angst in a quest for transcendence (Chang).

Frustrated with trying to establish an identity which encompasses both Asian and American cultures, second generation evangelicals dismiss both as subordinate to their true identity which is found “in Christ”—they are children of God.

Many scholars have taken notice of this “replacement” of ethnic identity with evangelical, Christian identity by second generation, Asian Americans. Busto links it to the model minority stereotype, and suggests that white evangelicals have appropriated this image of Asian Americans and funneled them into their groups:

[C]ampus Christian organizations, besides offering a supportive and familial structure for Asian American students, reinforces an upwardly mobile middle-class ethnic consonant with the model minority image; an image Takaki reminds us results in Asian American students feeling pressured to conform to the image of success and caving into the denial of individual diversity...Asian American evangelicals also appear to be stereotyped as God’s whiz kids—exemplars of evangelical piety and action—to which other evangelicals should aspire (Busto, 40).

The confusion about identity seems to be a salient factor for why many second generation, Asian Americans so readily adopt an evangelical understanding of true identity. Chang notes,

For many young Asian Americans, Christianity is a way of redefining identity, a niche that resonates with family and yet offers a way out of the narrow dictates of racial politics and the treadmill of academic achievement...a growing minority of Asian Americans are embracing evangelism as a way of coming to terms with their identities (Chang).

Instead of trying to reconcile Asian and American cultures into their identities, second generation, Asian American evangelicals bypass both in favor of a “Christian” identity. The paradoxical element is that though race/ethnicity are not important factors in their Christian understanding, most of them remain in Asian, mono-ethnic churches and Christian organizations. Chang observes,

For Asian Americans turned off by the superficiality of racial politics on campus, the discontent translates itself into a spiritual forum that

retains an ethnic character and yet removes itself completely from the dialogue of race and protest (Chang).

We now turn to how these contextual variables impact second generation, Asian American evangelicals as they interpret the Bible and Christian faith.

Interpretation

“For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith...There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26-28).

This passage from the New Testament is particularly salient for second generation, Asian American evangelicals as they embrace a new identity as a child of God, which supersedes any other identity, including racial or ethnic. To become a Christian means that one’s identity

Asian American evangelicals will need to reevaluate how their identities as Asian Americans shape their Christian understanding beyond gathering in mono-ethnic groups.

as an ethnic person is subordinate to one’s status as a disciple of Christ. There becomes a separation of inner and outer identities, with the emphasis upon the inward. Russell Jeung states,

The teachings of GFC thus recognize an Asian American identity as legitimate and as a valid basis for church mobilization, but also state that a more real and authentic identity can be found in knowing Jesus Christ. These two identities coincide as parallel identities...Being Christian is an interior and spiritual state of being that should influence how one relates and behaves in this world (230).

There is a strange relationship between race/ethnicity and faith as Asian American evangelicals on the one hand claim that race/ethnicity are subordinate, yet remain in exclusively Asian groups. The mission statement of Asian American Christian Fellowship (AACF) states,

The mission of Asian American Christian Fellowship (AACF) is to reach into the university and collegiate community, primarily to

those who are Asian Pacific Americans, with the life-changing message of Jesus Christ (AACF webpage).

Beyond the statement that their group is primarily made up of Asian Americans, race is not even discussed. Instead, the focus is upon changing the interior reality of people. Jeung reviews an Asian American seminary student's sermon, in which he observes the separation of the interior and exterior self. He says,

Although she acknowledged her background and used it as a humorous point of commonality with her audience, she urged people to look beyond the "exterior" to see people based on their needs, value, and potential. Ethnicity, race, and sexuality are not as important as one's privatized needs for a relationship with God. Instead, what is affirmed is one's identity as potential to become a child of God (231-232).

This separation of racial and Christian identities largely shapes how an evangelical Asian American reads Scripture. The Bible articulates a new identity, subordinating any other identity. Therefore when asked who they are, the primary answer is a child of God.

Several scholars have critically assessed the self-identification of Asian Americans with evangelicalism. While they may think they have come to a truer and more authentic way of understanding themselves, some believe that all they have done is adopted white ideology. Timothy Tseng observes about one interpretation of a biblical text by Asian Americans, that

What is missing in Chinese American evangelical appropriation of Acts 6 is a critique of how structural racism operates in white American evangelical circles. Without tools for structural analysis, ABC [American Born Chinese] evangelicals may be in danger of making "whiteness" their norm and perhaps open themselves up to criticism that they are "investing in whiteness" (263).

Antony Alumkal makes similar observations, stating that Asian American evangelicals have a "theological orientation that [is] nearly indistinguishable from that of mainstream American evangelism" (240). Regarding racial issues, he cites Galatians 3:26-28 as the text evangelicals commonly use to understand the problem, which is primarily a spiritual one. He says that Asian

American evangelicals affirm the standard evangelical discourse which insists, "that ultimately it [is] Christian identity, not ethnic or racial identity, that really matter[s]" (246).

Alumkal further notes that this embracing of white, evangelical theology seems rather odd because of the high degree of education that Asian American evangeli-

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cals have obtained, often in the fields of science. He quotes one person on her view of the creation story in Genesis:

I'd probably say I take it literally. It says in the Bible it took God six days to create the world. I've heard other Christians say, "Well, that's a symbolic day because what is a day for us might be a split second for God." But then I think if it took thousands of years, why didn't God say it took thousands of years? God said it took him a day to create this or that, and so it was six days. So I take the Bible at face value (244).

What is so interesting about this and other people's views, Alumkal observes, is how their scientific knowledge "did not lead them to question the scientifically problematic beliefs associated with contemporary evangelicalism" (244). As to why Asian Americans would so readily accept this understanding of Christianity, he comes to similar conclusions that other scholars have made. The angst caused by trying to reconcile Asian and American identities is easily solved by adopting a Christian identity and evangelical worldview where the boundaries seem much more rigid and certain. Though some Asian American theologians have pushed for their communities to incorporate more of their Asian heritages in their hermeneutical methods, Alumkal states that,

[M]any second-generation Asian American evangelicals do not appear to be interested in developing their own contributions to Christian theology. Instead, they remain committed to

the theology of American evangelicalism with little awareness of its roots in Anglo-American culture (249).

Thus the second generation, Asian American evangelical hermeneutic looks overwhelmingly like white evangelicalism.

Ironically, for the non-Christian Asian Americans, the evangelical identity only serves to keep them away from Christianity. Some feel that these evangelical Asian Americans simply confirm and promote “unflattering stereotypes: the goodie-two-shoes nerd, the passive convert, the pious geek” (Chang). Others see the proliferation of Asian American Christian churches and organizations “as exclusionist, cliquish, conformist clubs that do nothing to refute stereotypes” (Busto, 143). If these are the lost, Asian American souls that second generation, Asian American evangelicals would like to reach, clearly they will need to reevaluate how their identities as Asian Americans shape their Christian understanding beyond gathering in mono-ethnic groups.

Response

As a second generation Asian American who came to faith during college, these issues are close to my heart. It is because of the efforts of people in the evangelical community that I am now a Christian and in the ministry. At the same time, I find that the white, evangelical paradigm is inadequate for me as I become more aware of how race affects hermeneutics. Deep inside many Asian American Christians, including myself, is a desire to express their faith in a manner that is authentic and true to whom God has created them to be—both American *and* Asian. Simply eating Chinese, Korean, or Japanese food after church service is not a sufficient addendum to white evangelicalism. It is time for Asian Americans to cast off the burden of assimilation, because assimilation implies they are foreigners. Their voice is often missing in the dialogue about faith and race, or at best, pushed to the margins. In the past, the table fellowship of Christians has been hosted by white evangelicals and Asian Americans have come as guests bringing their ethnic dish to the potluck. This needs to change because without Asian Americans at the table as full participants, the community of faith is not complete. Asian American Christians do a disservice to the body of Christ by remaining quiet observers instead of active members in bringing their unique perspective into the hermeneutical conversation.

In regard to the question of identity, the fact that many Asian Americans feel a need to subordinate their Asian self should be recognized for what it is—racism. There is often a false assumption in the white evangelical perspective, that faith and culture are two separate spheres. White culture has become the normative perspective in American Christianity, and therefore is accepted as being culture-less. In reality, culture and faith have never been separate. Asking Asian Americans to subordinate their cultural identity to a “Christian” one, is really asking them to become white. The truth is that we cannot speak of a purely Christian identity which exists above a cultural one—faith in Jesus has always been embodied in a cultural context. Instead of subordinating their Asian American identity to a “Christian” one (which generally means white evangelical), they should be encouraged to embrace their background as a crucial part of who God has made them to be and not just a secondary factor. It is not enough to adopt someone else’s identity; Asian American Christians must forge their *own* understanding of what it means to be a faithful follower of Christ.

This is not an easy process, and involves wrestling with two cultures that sometimes seem diametrically opposed. However, by incorporating this tension into their hermeneutical lens, Asian American Christians will be able to speak more effectively to the large population of Asian American non-Christians. By embodying their bicultural background in their Christian identity, they can become Asian American evangelicals in their own right as they translate the gospel in a relevant manner.



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George Kelsey, Christianity and Race:

A View from the Academy

By Harold Dean Trulear

The town of Madison, New Jersey, has a history of race relations much like that of the dozen or so communities in the northern region of the Garden State where African Americans were brought in to work as domestics for the wealthy. In the late nineteenth-century, that usually meant life as a live-in servant, working as a butler, cook, driver gardener or housekeeper. As the twentieth-century dawned, some of these communities built small sections of housing specifically for their Black help. Often, the local leadership would contact a bishop or other representative of one of the Black Methodist denominations, African Methodist Episcopal, A.M.E. Zion, or Union American Methodist, in order to negotiate the planting and construction of a “colored” church for their workers (Baptist churches were organized later, after a sufficient number of Baptist born-Baptist bred members had come to the community and would split from the Methodist church).

Such developments meant that it was in these smaller towns like Madison, Plainfield, Montclair, and yes, Princeton, that the older established Black communities thrived in New Jersey prior to the First World War. Larger cities such as Newark, Paterson and Jersey City would await the mass migration between the World Wars to develop its larger Black communities. Indeed, Madison whites built Bethel A.M.E. Church in 1884, and after the turn of the century they constructed housing for the former live-in servants, just north of the main east-west street in the town. Madison had an established, identifiable Black neighborhood (just north of its main street, Madison Avenue) before its larger neighbor to the east, Newark.

Race relations in the town were relatively stable. Blacks knew their place, of course, but the radical class distinction between the Black community and the wealthy white majority played a role in this as well. There was also a growing Italian community, brought to Madison as gardeners for the horticultural businesses that gave the town its nickname “The Rose City.” Even in the 1960’s, as a growing racial consciousness swept Black America, relations in Madison remained cordial (although local legend has it that when the violent disturbances arose in Newark in 1967, the

Madison police department was ordered to guard the local train station, lest “looters” jump on the Erie Lackawanna commuter train to bring their mayhem to the bucolic suburb).

But there was another development in race relations occurring in Madison in the 1960’s, perhaps even unknown to the majority of locals of either hue. One of its residents, a scholarly bespectacled African American ethics professor at one of the town’s two private universities was putting the finishing touches on his magnum opus, a theological and ethical analysis of racism. This book, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man*, remains today as the finest fully orbed theological treatise on racism in the modern world. While George Kelsey had clear experiential grounds to study race from the impassioned perspective of the oppressed minority, he steadfastly clung to the notion that scholarly theological inquiry, engaged from the perspective of objectivity and rigor, would reveal the sinful nature of racism, and challenge the American church to repentance and renewal.

George Kelsey lived on a quiet street at the northern end of the Black section of Madison. His home was a moderately sized frame house, a step up from the cramped quarters poor Blacks inhabited. But when he came to Madison in 1951, he had been scheduled to visit a variety of homes suitable for a new professor of ethics at Drew University. It was only after the realtor saw that the potential clients were Black that they were directed to the neighborhood just north of Madison Avenue. The house may have been similar to the parsonage in which he lived as a boy growing up in Griffin, GA, the son of a local Baptist preacher. Kelsey’s father was also the principle of the local school for Blacks. “You see, Mr. Trulear,” he said to me in a meeting in his office during the last year of his tenure at Drew, “Negroes in my generation never attended public schools. The local Baptist association

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would select its most educated pastor and wife, and they would conduct classes for the young people for the entire area. The work would be supported by weekly collections, known as the ‘penny offering,’ taken by each church and then given to the teaching pastor and his wife to support the school.”

For Kelsey, like Benjamin Mays and other African American Southerners who rose to prominence in American education, that meant obtaining a sixth grade education. For anything beyond that a student would

Kelsey centers on the thesis that racism is an idolatrous faith.

have to enroll in the high school academy of a historically Black college, which would require moving to the campus and paying tuition, room and board. Mays, the president of Morehouse College when Kelsey would later serve there as chairman of the department of religion, found his way to the academy at what is now South Carolina State College the hard way. The local school in Mays’ hometown only met three to four months out of the year because of the need for youth to work the farms (Rovaris 11). Mays’ father, a share-cropper, was bothered by the interruption that school forced on his son’s time at work. When the young Mays decided to go to the academy, he literally had to run away from home (Mays 35-38).

Kelsey, on the other hand, was the son of an educated pastor, and attendance at the academy was expected. He enrolled in the high school housed at Morehouse College where he would later matriculate as a college student as well.

Upon graduation from Morehouse in 1934, Kelsey began seminary study at Andover Newton Theological Seminary. This was something of an experiment for both parties—ANTS in having a Black student, and Kelsey in living in the North (Smith 4-5). Of course, there were no predominantly or historically white seminaries that would have admitted Kelsey in the 1930’s; others in the North practiced other forms of discrimination. Kelsey performed well at Andover Newton. He matriculated at Yale University for his Ph.D. and accepted a call to Morehouse to teach religion in 1938.

It was while teaching at Morehouse that Kelsey had the experience for which he is best known today. One of his advisees was the son of an Atlanta Baptist minister, who had come to the college to study sociology in hopes of going to law school. The young

Atlantan, admitted to Morehouse at the age of fifteen due to the shortage of available prospective students in 1944, brought an adolescent’s skepticism to religion, not deeming it intellectually sound; and while history rightly records the influence of President Mays on Martin Luther King, Jr., George Kelsey also influenced King as his classroom teacher and academic advisor, and worked closely with him during the student’s senior year. It was Kelsey who showed the young King the intellectual rigors associated with the study (and Practice) of an informed religion. In the classroom, Kelsey showed King “that behind the legends and myths of the Book were many profound truths which one could not escape.” It was Kelsey who directed King to Pennsylvania’s Crozer Theological Seminary for his theological education, and it was Kelsey from whom King earned the only “A” in his undergraduate career (Carson 42-43).

Donald Gene Jones has rightly noted that Kelsey has lived under his more famous student’s shadow. But the shadow emanates from more than King. Jones also avers that “the popularity of such luminaries [at Drew] as Carl Michalson, Bernard Anderson, Will Herberg, John Dillenberger, and Stanley Hopper,” and nationally respected ethicists as “Paul Ramsey, Joseph Fletcher and James Gustafson,” as well as emerging African American religious scholars James Cone and Joseph Washington “claimed more notoriety than Kelsey in the late sixties and seventies” (Jones 38-39). Indeed, when C. Eric Lincoln visited Drew’s campus in 1976, he was asked about Kelsey’s *magnum opus*, and the then dean of African American religious studies offered, “I read it,” without so much as commentary.

But history’s hindsight reveals that the study in the modest wood frame house in the “Negro section” of Madison provided far more of an impact on the changing nature of racial conventions in the United States than concurrent assessment would reveal. Jones offers that “its publication was a social event of timely significance. At the critical phase of the civil rights movement—the most significant social revolution in American history—Kelsey threw this book into the battle. It was not just another academic exercise. The timing— the year 1965— and the meaning of this publication cannot be underestimated” (Jones 43).

Yet, Kelsey would have read Jones’ appraisal and argued that the engagement of racism via the route of academic exercise gave the tome its power. Kelsey labored at Morehouse and Drew as a scholar who refused to use anything less than the basic conventions of intellectual inquiry to make his arguments. The dis-

crimination of his youth, the indignities of sophisticated northern segregation, and even his isolation within the otherwise halcyon suburb of Madison would not serve as ample documentation for his writing. For Kelsey, the plural of anecdote was not data. Rather, it was precisely because he demonstrated his theses through the best of available and availing ethical theory, drawing from Martin Buber, H. Richard Niebuhr and others, that, for him, his arguments had weight in the intellectual community. It may well be that his fidelity to such an objective mode of theological inquiry doomed him to secondary status when the pioneers of modern Black theology offered their less objective and culturally impassioned treatises.

Indeed, Mark Chapman notes that many of these pioneers drew upon Kelsey's work as they "launched their prophetic critique of the white church and its theology" (Chapman 1999:9). James Evans called Kelsey's work "a foundational text for the development of Christian anthropology in black theology" (Evans 104). Emmanuel McCall rightly notes that Kelsey was a forerunner in this area, though he preferred a dialogical approach to the inclusion of a black perspective in theological inquiry to the development of a black theology per se (McCall 328).

It was Chapman, however, who devoted signal attention to the indebtedness of James Cone to Kelsey. James Cone found Kelsey's understanding of racism as an "alien faith" critical to the development of his analysis of the nature of oppression (Chapman 1999:28-30). By positing racism as idolatry, Kelsey deemed it incompatible with Christianity. Racist faith calls creation defective and denies the creation of every human being in the image of God (Kelsey 1965: 72-74). Building on this idea, Cone wrote that racism is a "complete denial of the Incarnation and thus of Christianity" in its affirmation of slavery and segregation (Cone 75). Also, argues Chapman, Cone and Kelsey both affirmed the political nature of racism. Kelsey proffered that the logical political end of racism is genocide. Cone argued that as long as whites can be sure that God is on their side, there is potentially no limit to their violence against anyone who threatens their American way of life (Chapman, 1996:127).

Kelsey's *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man* centers on the thesis that racism is an idolatrous faith. "Most morally concerned Christian leaders have rarely understood racism for what it really is," he wrote (Kelsey 1965:9). For Kelsey, racism had a fundamentally religious character to it that made race the idol of worship. It is "a system of meaning and value that

could only have arisen out of the peculiar conjunction of modern ideas and values with the political, economic, and technological realities of colonialism and slavery" (Kelsey 1965: 19). While history has witnessed other forms of "groupism" such as tribalism and ethnocentrism, these phenomena did not involve commitments to racial purity so much as they reflected the collective experience of the group in power. Modern racism, however, traces its roots to the religious intolerance of the Middle Ages, first visited on the Jews and then the Muslims. Europeans drew lines of demarcation between believers and non-believers that, when transported to the African shores in the time of the slave trade and colonialism, became the model for the distinctions between light and dark skinned people. Africans "were not outside the human community because their skin was dark or their noses broad... [but because] as heathen, they were outside the pale of both spiritual and civil rights by reason of their infidelity... [and therefore] were legitimate areas of conquest" (Kelsey 1965:21).

Kelsey then traces the development of "the gradually improving technology of transportation and military equipment of the European" and the growing popularity of slavery and colonialism, rendering medieval theological justification for conquest less expedient and necessitating an incremental shift to racial superiority

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as the justification for European dominance (Kelsey 1965: 22). Racism grew as the ideological and theological ground for such racial convention. The idol of race became that which, in a Niebuhrian sense, commanded both loyalty and trust. Race is the source of value and meaning. "No questions can be raised about the rightness or wrongness of the race; it is the value center which throws light on all other value" (Kelsey, 1965:27).

The faith character of racism leads Kelsey to term it "human alienation." Says the ethicist, "[I]t is the prototype of all human alienation. It is the one form of human conflict that divides human beings as human beings. That which the racist glorifies in himself is his being. And that which he scorns and rejects in members of the out-race is precisely their human being.

Although the racist line of demarcation and hostility inevitably finds expression through institutions of society, it is not primarily a cultural, political, or economic boundary. Rather, it is a boundary of estrangement in the order of human beings as such” (Kelsey 1965:23). One can almost imagine Kelsey reflecting on how the line of demarcation had impacted his choice of living arrangements in Madison, influenced his treatment at hotels and restaurants while out lecturing, and kept his dissertation from being published for almost thirty years (Trulear 91, n.12; Jones 41). Yet, again, his approach to his subject matter reflected his belief, not uncommon to African American intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century, that the rigorous academic pursuit of truth would provide vindication for Blacks seeking justice.

It is a short journey from Kelsey’s critique of race as idol to the defective anthropology of racism. In addition to calling creation defective, racism takes the fact of race, a “biological element” of a person or groups being, and elevates it to the level of “essential factor” (Kelsey 1965:74). Christian theological anthropology roots such essence in the *Imago Dei*, thereby relativizing and contextualizing any other dimensions of the human. Humanity created in the image of God eliminates all pretenders to human essence. The racist offers a collective biology, one Kelsey terms a “pseudo-species,” reflecting the order of nature as its poor substitute, thereby ignoring the created nature of order, and thereby ignoring or slandering the Creator of nature (Kelsey 1978).

Kelsey believed that Christian faith put forth an anthropology which affirmed the “unity of the human race in creation and destiny,” as opposed to the human alienation which reflects racism’s divisive natural anthropology (Kelsey, 1965:74). Commitment to this type of unity in creation and destiny necessitates that the church work for a manifestation of this unity in congregation and community, worship and world. If all humans bear the image of God as a starting point, then God calls them to a destiny which reflects that image—an image of oneness. Such oneness requires work, the work of reconciliation. Reconciliation calls for parties on both sides, the in-group and the out-group, to make movement toward one another, not for the purpose of compromise and coexistence, but to manifest the common creation and move toward the common destiny. This is why Kelsey could not follow fully the trajectory of the Black Theology movement his critique helped launch. To the extent that Black theology was rooted in the limited anthropological

notion of race—though here understood politically and not biologically—Kelsey would struggle with its ability to move toward the oneness and reconciliation he championed.

Emmanuel McCall, in an essay entitled “Black Liberation Theology: A Politics of Freedom,” offered an overview of the scope and history of Black theology as discipline and movement. Writing to a basically Southern Baptist audience, McCall presented several theologians as exemplars of the political nature of Christian faith, as argued by Black Theology’s pio-

Kelsey believed that Christian faith put forth an anthropology which affirmed the “unity of the human race in creation and destiny,” as opposed to the human alienation which reflects racism’s divisive natural anthropology.

neers. Yet when Kelsey’s work is considered, McCall states that Kelsey is committed to a Christian theological discussion that includes a Black perspective, not a Black theology in and of itself. Political categories such as race cannot do justice to the fullness of the image of God, and as such must always be relativized. Even when Kelsey taught Black Theology at Drew, he did so within the context of his course “Black Theology in Dialogue.”

The theme of reconciliation also characterized Kelsey’s public intellectual career. Kelsey spent considerable time presenting his ideas in lectures and articles aimed at predominantly, or all-white audiences. In 1947, Kelsey addressed the Baptist Student Convention in Dallas, Texas. A Southern Baptist student ministry, the Convention most likely heard of Kelsey through contacts made at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, where he did his dissertation research. Kelsey’s dissertation for his Yale Ph.D. was to be an analysis of the social ethics of the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Dallas speech became the first of many conversations between Kelsey and that group (Kelsey 1973; Trulear 73-75).

In Dallas, Kelsey made an impassioned plea for an end to the hypocrisy of racism within the church and world. He discussed the presence of the three great caste systems of the modern Western world, the Union of South Africa, Rhodesia and the United States of

America. The hypocrisy of these nations is revealed in their appeal to Christian principles and democratic ideals. Kelsey delivered, "...[R]ace involves us in the greatest moral and psychological contradiction of our lives. We are morally schizophrenic, professing democratic and Christian ideals with our lips and completely denying them in racial practice and theory." He concluded with words certain to have power with the nation still in the recent aftermath of the Second World War: "perhaps Hitler and his men had easier consciences because they also repudiated Christianity and democracy" (Kelsey 1947, n.p.).

Kelsey's ongoing commitment to dialogue with the white church continued in several speeches given in Southern Baptist venues. He even joined the local Southern Baptist congregation in Madison. He published in the *Review and Expositor*, the journal of the Southern Baptist Seminary, as well as for the SBC's Home Mission Board. But the most interesting exchange between Kelsey and the white church came in the wake of his publication of *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man*.

Southern professor Rembert Truluck reviewed the book, and presented his review to the Theological Division Colloquium in 1966. There, Truluck rehearsed Kelsey's main themes, providing a chapter by chapter overview of the text. Truluck also offered an evaluation of the book, and finished with a compilation of further reading suggestions, gleaned primarily from the books footnotes. Truluck clearly saw the challenge Kelsey presented to America in general and the Southern Baptists in particular. He focused on the issue of theological anthropology, noting Kelsey's thesis that racism is an idolatrous faith with a doctrine of the human based on naturalism. He pointed out to his seminary colleagues Kelsey's idea of the political program of racism, the fact that while "[t]he form of racism is a naturalistic ontology, ... its vital principle is the will to power expressed in a political plan of action" (Kelsey 1965:11).

The political program would have been a most disturbing notion to this audience. Kelsey had argued that the logical political conclusion of racism would be genocide- the elimination of those who represented wither defective humanity or were simply not human. He argued that the Christian ethos of the West had modified the political program of racism so that the harshness of genocide had evolved into the less harsh (though still sinful) slavery and segregation (Kelsey 1965:97).

In his conclusion, Truluck argues that this book "has the shock effect of making one face the unpleasant implications of many of the social structures that most Southerners, including ministers, have accepted for generations... [Yet] what Southern racist will sit still long enough to hear Kelsey's arguments? If he did

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listen, would not the racist answer the book with his faith, beginning with the belief that no Negro could write an 'untainted book?'" (Truluck 9-10).

In a sense, this was precisely Kelsey's aim-to write an untainted book that would prove, through the objective use of scholarly analysis, the truth of his claims toward justice. While his more famous student fought discrimination with public protest and demonstrations, the mentor remained in the university and the world of theological education, pressing much the same claim. King and Kelsey continued some correspondence throughout King's life, with the junior preacher seeking Kelsey's counsel in professional direction, and editorial wisdom. Indeed, in a letter dated 31 March 1958, he writes "I am mainly concerned with your critical comments on my intellectual pilgrimage to non-violence...and the theoretical meaning of the philosophy of non-violence...I am deeply concerned with having this in line with straight theological and philosophical thinking" (MLK papers Vol. 4, document 580331).

King's appeal to Kelsey's ability to provide "straight theological and philosophical thinking" well documents Kelsey's sense of his role in the struggle for racial justice. Even in his own Madison, he was seemingly aloof to the cause, shunning the visibility of public demonstrations while pressing his claim in the arena of the academy. This arena had a visibility of its own. Though not seen protesting on the streets of Madison, he was surely seen by Martin King. Though not part of the public demonstrations on campus, he did bring King to the Drew campus. Though not involved in the southern marches, he was read at the Southern Seminary. Though not an advocate of Black theology, his analysis was a powerful tributary which gave energy to the movement in the late sixties and seventies. And while not seen as one whose presence altered the course of history, for many, his was a presence that

altered those who altered history.

Kelsey would probably be uncomfortable with such a designation. For one thing, he looked not at the impact of an act, but its integrity. In 1957, Kelsey offered this advice to King “a man of your consecration is not concerned with his own honors or with any dramatic and spectacular accomplishments which may be associated with his name. He is concerned rather with ministering to and meeting the needs of men in Christ’s name. This is why you have wrought great things. To you it does not matter whether there are ‘rabbits to be pulled out of the hat.’ But it does matter to you that the least person in your midst needs a cool cup of water” (King papers Vol. 4, document 570622).

And so also Kelsey believed that straight theological thinking ought to be lived in the flesh in order to affirm the oneness of humanity that crosses racial, class, and status lines. As he told King to represent the integrity of the ministry amongst the least of these-recognizing their common humanity-he lived much the same way in daily encounters. One former student of Kelsey relates the story of Kelsey’s encounter with a poor beggar woman in a foreign airport. Unable to use words to communicate across the language barrier, the woman looked at Kelsey. Kelsey continues: “Her eyes fixed on mine as I reached into my pocket to find something to place in her outstretched hand. And as those eyes looked deeply into my own, I wondered: What did she see? Compassion or condemnation? Interest or irritation? Faith or fear? And as she took the dollar from my hand, did she feel hope or humiliation? Did she feel helped out or hurried out of the way? I remember that moment in an airport when the eyes of a beggar woman fixed on mine, and I know that if I had truly viewed her with the mind of Christ, she would have seen nothing in my eyes but love, only love” (Brown n.p.).

So a North Carolinian pastor has listened, too. Add him and his congregation to the above list of those who were stirred by the life unfolding on the north side of the colored section of Madison, NJ. It was a privilege to know him and it is our responsibility to listen to him still.



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Excerpts from
**United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation
 as an Answer to the Problem of Race**

by Curtiss Paul DeYoung, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim
 Oxford University Press, 2003¹

Excerpts from Chapter Two—Congregations in the Early Church

Christianity's first congregation emerged from an undistinguished group of Galilean followers of Jesus who gathered together in Jerusalem during the days following the drama of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. The death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus ushered in a new era for his disciples. No longer did they have a human Jesus providing guidance. The mantle of leadership passed on to them. Those early followers faced the challenge of implementing Jesus' vision of a house of prayer for all the nations. So 120 of them gathered together in an upstairs room praying for wisdom and direction. Among those assembled were the twelve apostles minus Judas Iscariot who had betrayed Jesus. Matthias was there having been selected to replace Judas as a member of the twelve (Acts 1:15-26). Also in the room were the women disciples who had faithfully followed Jesus in his three years of ministry and fearlessly supported him through the ordeal of his death. Mary the mother of Jesus and other relatives joined the group as well. (Acts 1:13-15). They were a congregation seeking an identity and purpose without the presence of their leader.

After several weeks of meeting together for prayer, an amazing and transforming event occurred on the day of Pentecost, interrupting those clandestine gatherings of spiritual discernment. According to the author of the Acts of the Apostles, the power of the Holy Spirit came upon those 120 Galileans praying in an upper room and propelled them out into the streets proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ in the languages of the nations. "Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem" gathered and inquired as a result of this unusual occurrence (Acts 2:5). Individuals who relocated to Jerusalem from Jewish enclaves throughout the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe heard the Gospel in the dialect of their local community in the country of their origin. The Spirit of Jesus supernaturally spoke through these Galilean disciples in the language of the house of prayer for all the nations. On the day of Pentecost the Jerusalem congregation grew from a congregation of 120 Galilean Jews to a congregation of over 3,000 multicultural, multilingual Jews (2:41). Several thousand more were added in the days that fol-

lowed (4:4, 5:14, 6:7). The church was multicultural and multilingual from the first moment of its existence.

... Many of the Jews who migrated to Jerusalem from the Diaspora spoke Greek. They worshiped in synagogues for Greek speakers and read from a Greek translation of the Scriptures called the *Septuagint*. So the Jerusalem congregation bridged a divide found in first-century Judaism—culture- and language-specific synagogues.² The diversity of the Jerusalem congregation also expressed itself in opinions shaped by cultural experience. Biblical scholar Jerome Crowe notes:

A Jew born and brought up in Jerusalem was likely to be characterized by an enthusiastic admiration for the Temple and its worship. Many migrants from the Diaspora shared this enthusiasm, though others clearly did not. . . . Jews born in Palestine may well have been prone to identify all Gentiles with those Gentiles they were most familiar with, the mercenary soldiers in the service of Rome who enforced an oppressive pagan regime. Jews from the Diaspora, from Antioch or North Africa or the great university city of Alexandria, were more likely to have an understanding of the positive values of Hellenistic culture and a sympathetic appreciation of its moral ideals.³

... This Jesus movement brought a Gospel that reconciled the differences and tensions often experienced in relationships between Jews and Gentiles. To those first hearing the message, the disciples of Jesus proclaimed "a universalistic Judaism, which was open to outsiders."⁴ Eventually these congregations existed in a space outside both the world of Judaism and the varieties of religions and philosophies found in the Roman Empire.⁵ Biblical professor David Rhoads sums up the miracle of the first century church:

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The early Christian movement meant nothing less than breaking down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles. And this universal vision was much more than the combining of two groups, for neither was monolithic. On the one side, Judaism was itself multiform in that era of history—both in Palestine with its various sectarian groups and among the communities of Jews dispersed throughout the Roman Empire and throughout the Parthian Empire to the east. On the other side, there was the multiplicity of Gentile nations. The Greek word *Gentiles* literally means nations. Across the ancient Mediterranean world, there was an incredible array of local ethnic communities, subcultures, and language groups within the aegis of the Roman Empire. That is, there were many “nations” within Northern Africa and the south; Palestine and the east; Asia Minor, Greece, and the north; Italy and the west; and on the islands in the Mediterranean Sea. The region around the Mediterranean Sea was multilingual, multiracial, and multiethnic, with many different religions and philosophies. These Jewish groups and Gentile nations comprised the multiplicity of cultures that Christianity sought to address and to embrace. In this multicultural arena, the diversity of early Christianity took shape.⁶

According to Acts, the first congregation to experience the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles into one coherent faith community formed in Antioch of Syria in the thirties. Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire, with a population of nearly half a million people.⁷ A wide cultural mix of peoples including Syrians, Romans, Greeks, Arabs, Persians, Armenians, Parthians, Cappadocians, and Jews comprised Antioch’s urban population.⁸ One seventh of the population was Jewish. A Jewish community existed in Antioch from the early days of the city.⁹ The relative peace of the Jewish community was disrupted in the late thirties and early forties. Ethnic tensions erupted between Jews and the majority Greco-Syrians. Mobs attacked Jews and torched their synagogues.¹⁰

... Ethnic strife was intense. Enslaved persons composed close to one third of Antioch’s population, “many of whom had been deported from their homeland in the wake of ruinous wars with no hope of improving their position.”¹¹ Race riots were common because so many people of differing ethnic and cultural

groups lived together in cramped overcrowded conditions.¹² Sociologist Rodney Stark adds that Antioch was “a city filled with hatred and fear rooted in intense ethnic antagonisms and exacerbated by a constant stream of strangers. A city so lacking in stable networks of attachments that petty incidents could prompt mob violence.”¹³

Into this city arrived Greek-speaking Jewish Christians who left Jerusalem during the persecution of the mid-thirties. They began preaching to fellow Jews (Acts 11:19). Some of their Cyrenean and Cypriot leaders also preached to Greeks (11:20). This gave birth to

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the first congregation of followers of Jesus Christ that included both Jews and Gentiles. Over time it is quite probable that the wide cultural mix of people in Antioch was represented in the church.¹⁴ The Jerusalem church sent Barnabus to provide leadership and a link with the mother church (11:24). Barnabus recruited Saul of Tarsus (later known as the apostle Paul) to join the leadership team (11:25-26). Three others also emerged as leaders: Simeon, who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, and Manean, a member of the court of Herod the ruler (13:1).

The Antioch congregation selected a diverse leadership team in the early stages of their formation. ...Both Paul and Barnabus were Jews raised outside of Palestine and immersed in Greek culture, yet they were fluent in the traditions of Jerusalem. Saul spent his school years in Jerusalem under the watchful eye of the noted teacher Gamaliel. Both were bilingual, speaking Aramaic and Greek. Manean grew up in the household of Herod Antipas as a stepbrother.¹⁵ This was the Herod who beheaded John the Baptist and interviewed Jesus during his trial. His nephew, Herod Agrippa, persecuted the church in Palestine even as Manean provided leadership in Antioch (Herod Agrippa martyred James, one of the original twelve disciples). Lucius of Cyrene came from North Africa, possibly one of the persons who initially preached in Antioch. Simeon, called Niger (black), was most likely a black African.

The Antioch congregation lived out an inclusive table fellowship that emulated the social practices of

Jesus. Each person who joined the fellowship felt affirmed for the culture of his or her background. Yet each also adopted a higher calling through allegiance to Jesus Christ. Jews and Gentiles continued to embrace their culture of origin but broke with certain cultural rules that inhibited their ability to live as one in Christ. For example they ate and socialized together. While this was not permitted or approved of in society, in “the many house-congregations of Antioch . . . Jews and Gentiles, living together in crowded city quarters, freely mixed.”¹⁶ For Jewish Christians this required them to give up an understanding that their ethnic identity necessitated separation from Gentiles and to risk being seen as developing close relations with pagans.¹⁷ In the midst of Antioch’s extreme ethnic tensions “Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity.”¹⁸

Therefore the social commentators of the day in Antioch could not identify the followers of Jesus with any known group. The members of the Antioch congregation certainly did not practice pagan rites or emperor worship. Nor did they all live by Jewish cultural and religious standards. So they were called Christians or Christ followers (Acts 11:26). This name declared that they made up “a social but not an ethnic group.”¹⁹ As theologian Virgilio Elizondo states, the Christians “could not be classified according to the classification categories of either the pagans or the Jews. They were both and yet they were neither the one nor the other alone. They were the same and yet they lived differently. They were bound together by a new intimacy and mutual concern that went beyond normal, acceptable behavior within the empire.”²⁰

The Antioch congregation became the model for the expansion of the church in the first century. The foremost initiator of new congregations in this period—the apostle Paul—was mentored and sent forth by the leadership of the Antioch congregation. The congregations founded by Paul and his coworkers often started in a fashion similar to Antioch. They preached first to Jews and then to Gentiles. Paul’s team of preachers started at the local synagogue. By preaching in the synagogues first they reached some Jews (Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8). Few Jews would have found these emerging communities of faith attractive had the outreach begun with Gentiles. The cultural and religious changes required to join an all-Gentile assembly would have proven difficult at this point. Also among those attending the synagogues were some Gentiles—called “God-fearers”—who embraced

a monotheistic belief or were attracted to the moral vision of Judaism. Once God-fearing Gentiles became Christian converts they reached out to Gentiles who practiced pagan religions or emperor worship. Soon the congregations included Jews and people from many other nations. They were culturally diverse religious communities.

... Biblical scholar Gerd Theissen sums up well the optimism of these early believers:

How could the Jesus movement cherish the hope of permeating the whole of society with this pattern? Was that not to expect a miracle? And indeed a miracle is what they hoped for. The Jesus movement believed in miracles, in the realization of what appeared to be impossible. . . . Now if the movement had at its disposal powers which foretold a complete change in the world, might it also have confidence in ethical extremes? Would not the faith which moves mountains (Mark 11:23) also be capable of changing the human heart? If so many miracles had taken place, would not the miracle of love be possible also? We should not underestimate the encouraging effect of miracles.²¹

So for Theissen and us, the basic question is: “How were relatively stable and sturdy communities with considerable inner cohesion formed from a mixture of ethnic, social and religious groups? How did Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and barbarians, slaves and freemen, men and women, come to form a new unity in Christ?”²² We declare that the first century church was united by faith! This unity occurred as local congregations strategically implemented Jesus’ vision of a house of prayer for all the nations. Together these congregations produced a movement for social unity across the great divided of culture, tradition, class, and race. Ultimately, the unity of the first century church was the result of the miracle of reconciliation—a conversion from their ethnocentrism to the intention, practice, and vision of Jesus.

Excerpts from Chapter Three—Congregations and the Color Line

In the 1700s there was a significant increase in the slave trade bringing more Africans to live in the colonies. Also the legalization of lifetime slavery for Africans and their offspring was fully implemented. In the 1740s an evangelical movement called “The Great Awakening,” sparked by the revivalist preaching of

George Whitefield and others, drew poor whites and this growing population of enslaved African Americans into the Christian faith in large numbers. The primary beneficiaries of this revival were the Methodists and the Baptists. More and more African Americans joined in the services held at white congregations or at camp meetings. C. Eric Lincoln noted, “What the Africans found in the camp meetings of the Great Awakening was *acceptance and involvement as human beings*.”²³

Biracial congregations of whites and African Americans emerged out of these camp meeting revivals. During the second half of the eighteenth century some amazing possibilities presented themselves in these congregations. African Americans and whites

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worshipped together. Enslaved African Americans were also offered the right hand of fellowship. This ritual of membership occurred during a Sunday service. Members of the congregation would pass by the new member shaking hands with her or him as a symbol of welcome to the congregational family.²⁴ African Americans and whites even addressed each other as family using the terms “brother” and “sister.”²⁵ Historian John B. Boles writes:

This equality in the terms of address may seem insignificant today, but in an age when only whites were accorded the titles of Mr. and Mrs., and it was taboo for a white to so address a black, any form of address that smacked of equality was notable. Behind it lay the familial idea, accepted by whites in principle if not always in practice, that in the sight of God all were equal and were members of His spiritual family.²⁶

Some white ministers preached against slavery and freed the enslaved African Americans they owned.²⁷ One enslaved African recounted, “I had recently joined the Methodist Church and from the sermon I heard, I felt that God had made all men free and equal, and that I ought not to be a slave.”²⁸ Even more startling was

the fact that African Americans served in pastoral roles at some biracial congregations. Historian Nathan Hatch notes, “For a brief interlude, white evangelicals endorsed the desire of converts to exercise their preaching talents, and black preaching became a regular occurrence in Baptist and Methodist communions. In a variety of churches at the end of the century, black pastors even served racially mixed congregations.”²⁹ When the pastor of a mixed-race Baptist congregation in Virginia resigned from leadership the church invited an African American man to preach for them. The church was so delighted with his sermons that they paid for freedom for the man and his family. In another case an African American man—William Leman—pastored a white Baptist church in Virginia.³⁰ In yet another, Henry Evans—a free black—was licensed to preach by the Methodists. He started the first Methodist church in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Initially he preached only to African Americans. Soon some whites discovered his preaching and began attending. In was not long until the whites “crowded out” the blacks from their seats. The congregation received a white pastor but Evans remained as an assistant until his death.³¹

... In writing about Southern Baptists, historian Paul Harvey captures the essence of why biracial congregations eventually failed:

In the late eighteenth century, a moment of opportunity for a biracial religious order seemed fleetingly to present itself. . . . But this apparent opening was illusory. It quickly became evident that whites valued the blossoming of their evangelical institutions and would make the necessary moral accommodations to maximize their growth. Southern Baptists never accepted their African American coreligionists as equals. They lacked the will, the fortitude, the theology, and the intellectual tools to even contemplate doing so.³²

The early embrace of African Americans by whites faltered as societal norms pressed into the sacred sanctuaries of southern congregations. Many found interracial worship distasteful and refused to submit to African American leadership.³³ Soon whites “created a pattern of social intercourse within those churches that respected racial distinctions.”³⁴

After a brief fling with racial reconciliation, most whites returned to their marriage to racism. Biracial congregations soon separated the races in all aspects of

church life. Separate seating was instituted in most congregations. African Americans were relegated to back pews, galleries, roof pews, separate balconies, standing along the rear wall, or even listening from outside the building.³⁵ Blacks were seated “farther up, out, or back than the lowliest white servant.”³⁶ Some congregations had separate entrances for whites and blacks.³⁷ African Americans received communion “from a black assistant who served their segregated area.”³⁸ According to theologian Dwight Perry, “Some congregations even erected dividers several feet high so Blacks were not physically mingling with the White congregants.”³⁹ In many congregations African Americans outnumbered whites in attendance. When this became uncomfortable for whites, they instituted separate services—and sometimes formed separate congregations (under the rule of whites).⁴⁰ Albert Raboteau declares:

It was in this context also that the white and black members of mixed churches in the antebellum South struggled with the tension between Christian fellowship and the system of slavery. Fellowship required that all church members be treated alike; slavery demanded that black members, even the free, be treated differently. . . . This tension revealed the irreducible gap between the slave’s religion and that of his master. The slave knew that no matter how sincerely religious his master might be, his religion did not countenance the freedom of his slave. This was, after all was said and done, *the* limit to Christian fellowship. The division went deep; it extended as far as the interpretation of the Bible and the understanding of the Gospel.⁴¹

This tension and division that Raboteau describes led African Americans to create parallel opportunities for worship and fellowship. Enslaved persons of African descent developed their own unique forms of Christian interpretation and practice that spoke to the conditions created by racism. Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier called this the “invisible institution.”⁴² In secret places away from the view of the slaveholder African Americans formed their own religious communities. These were precursors to African American congregations and denominations.⁴³

... Yet another opportunity for the emergence of multiracial Christianity erupted in 1906 in Los Angeles, California. An ordained minister of the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana), William Seymour,

was at the center of what many have called the birth of the modern Pentecostal movement. Seymour began his involvement with the Church of God in Cincinnati, Ohio, at the turn of the century. He embraced their message of holiness and unity and traveled with other Church of God ministers preaching about reconciliation. In 1905, William Seymour learned of Charles Parham, a white Holiness preacher who was among the first to speak in tongues in the twentieth-century reemergence of Pentecostalism. Seymour attended a ten-week training course offered by Parham and

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became convinced of the importance of speaking in tongues as the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. (Due to Parham’s racism, Seymour, who was African American, sat outside the door of the room listening to the teaching.) Seymour’s newly acquired emphasis on speaking in tongues led to his departure from the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana), which did not approve of such phenomenon.⁴⁴

William Seymour eventually found his way to Los Angeles. His preaching emphasis on speaking in tongues made it difficult to find a church that embraced him (although he had not yet received the manifestation himself). Eventually he was invited to preach in various individuals’ homes. His emerging house congregation began with a few African Americans. In March 1906 some whites joined the congregation. On April 9, 1906, a revival began when Seymour and others began speaking in tongues. News of this event spread quickly. The crowds grew so rapidly that within a week the revivalists relocated to an abandoned building on Azusa Street that at one time had housed an African Methodist Episcopal congregation. Thus came the name, Azusa Street Revival. The congregation took the name Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission.⁴⁵

The gatherings were quite amazing because of their diversity. African Americans and whites attended in similar numbers. People of Hispanic, Asian American,

and Native American backgrounds as well as from other ethnic groups were often present. . . . It was very unusual and highly significant that an African American was the pastor of this multiracial congregation and revival. Also, William Seymour empowered women and people of all races into leadership in the worship services and in the administration of the congregation. Strong writes:

The congregants at Azusa transcended the social distinctions commonly adhered to by the broader culture. They denied the divisiveness of denominations. They washed each other's feet in the manner of the early church. . . . Blacks held positions of spiritual leadership over whites. Women preached to men. Children exhorted their elders. Mexican Americans testified to English-speakers in their own Spanish language—and in unknown languages.⁴⁶

Frank Bartleman, a minister in Los Angeles, remarked, "The 'color line' was washed away in the blood."⁴⁷

The services at the multiracial Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission continued for over three years, with three services a day, everyday of the week. Pentecostal historian Vinson Synan notes:

The Azusa Street movement seems to have been a merger of white American holiness religion with worship styles derived from the African-American Christian tradition, which had developed since the days of chattel slavery in the South. The expressive worship and praise at Azusa Street, which included shouting and dancing, had been common among Appalachian whites as well as southern blacks. The admixture of tongues and other charisms with southern black and white music and worship styles created a new and indigenous form of Pentecostalism. . . . The interracial aspects of Azusa Street were a striking exception to the racism and segregation of the times. The phenomenon of blacks and whites worshiping together under a black pastor seemed incredible to many observers.⁴⁸

The Azusa Street Revival ended in 1909 (with a brief resurgence in 1911-1912). The multiracial nature of this congregation proved difficult to sustain when the excitement of revival died down. Racism played a

role in the demise of the congregation's multiracial makeup. Many white Pentecostals abhorred the interracial gatherings and spoke against Seymour. There were disputes about approaches to leadership, which had

Seminaries can become places that take the lead in retooling the church for a movement...toward multiracial, multicultural congregations.

racial overtones. Seymour further isolated himself from the growing Pentecostal movement when he renounced his view that speaking in tongues was the initial evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit. He believed that the presence of the Holy Spirit produced unity. When Seymour observed racist whites speaking in tongues he certainly had to change his perspective regarding this as evidence of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁹ The Azusa Street congregation eventually became a small predominately African American congregation.

Response by Curtiss Paul DeYoung

In the course of writing the book *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (Oxford, 2003) with my co-authors Michael Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim, we discovered a significant difference between the practice of the first century church and that of the church in the United States. I have selected excerpts that illustrate this reality. The first century church demonstrated that the Gospel had the power to cross society's racial and cultural divides in its congregations. The church in the United States historically practiced segregation by race and culture in its congregations thereby implying that the Gospel was powerless to address society's racial and cultural divisions. There were moments in the history of the church in the United States when it seemed that first century Christianity was reemerging. Unfortunately, the church was unable to sustain these efforts. The history of the church in the United States caused W. E. B. Du Bois to comment in 1929, "The American Church of Christ is Jim Crowed from top to bottom. No other institution in America is built so thoroughly or more absolutely on the color line. Everybody knows this."⁵⁰

The twenty-first century has begun with a racial divided church—less than ten percent of Christian congregations in the United States are multiracial. This must change. If we believe that the Gospel of the first century is available in the twenty-first century then we

have a great opportunity in the midst of the rapidly changing demographics in the United States. In *United by Faith* we issued a call for a movement toward multi-racial, multicultural congregations. Seminaries can become places that take the lead in retooling the church for such a movement. This can be accomplished by equipping leaders with a biblical theology of reconciliation, a multicultural worldview, an expertise in anti-racism analysis, and a practice of spiritual disciplines.



Endnotes

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Sermons

Race, Grace, and the Community of Freedom

By Corey Widmer

Sermon Text: Galatians 2:11-21

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

No matter who you are or what kind of background you have, it's difficult to avoid the problems in the church. Though our media is generally silent about the activities of the Christian church in our culture, a scandal, a falling-out, or a messy separation will inevitably attract tremendous media attention and drag the church into the public sphere. What's the typical response? Religious people will usually sigh and moan, and wish for the days of the early church when the beloved community existed in perfect harmony. Non-religious people, however, may welcome the news as a confirmation of their suspicions that the church is full of hypocrites. Our text this morning shows us that this phenomenon is nothing new, for scandals and divisions have been in the church from the very beginning. But this particular scandal is unique in how incredibly *serious* it was – so serious, in fact, that the apostle Paul considered the most essential message of the Christian gospel to be jeopardized.

What was the problem in the church that Paul was addressing? In dealing with the problem in the church in Galatia, Paul draws from a previous problem he had encountered with the apostle Peter in the church in Antioch. In that situation, Paul was mortified that Peter had apparently abandoned the gospel, and had forgotten that all people who trust in Jesus Christ are acceptable before God, not on the basis of anything they have done but only through faith in Jesus Christ. This was a tough lesson for Peter to learn: he was a strict cultural Jew, raised on the ceremonial law system, and it was very difficult for him to set aside the idea that humans need to maintain a degree of moral "rightness" and perfection before they can secure God's acceptance and favor. But God taught him this difficult lesson through an amazing incident you can read about in Acts 10-11, and the message had completely liberated Peter. He was suddenly free not only to accept that non-Jewish people could become Christians, but also that he was able to commune and eat with them, a group with whom Jews were forbidden from associating. As Paul writes in our passage, "We have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law" (v. 16). Because all alike, both Jew and Gentile, are made perfect and acceptable before God – not on the basis of law, culture, ethnicity, or moral obedience, but only on the basis of Jesus' perfect life and death and resurrection – Jew and Gentile and anyone else could live together in peace and in freedom.

But now Peter had stopped eating with the Gentiles. What happened? Apparently a group who Paul calls "those of the circumcision" (v. 12) had come to Antioch and began teaching that Gentiles who had become Christians needed to be circumcised and follow the laws and customs of Moses to be truly saved. They didn't deny that people needed to trust in Jesus, but they went on to say that a person had to obey the Law of Moses as well to be *truly* accepted by God. This message was resulting in terrible social implications: the Jewish Christians were discouraged from even sitting at the same table with Gentile converts. Peter had accepted the instruction of this group and carried a number of Jewish Christians with him. In Paul's mind, this behavior was a denial of the radical gospel message of freedom that Peter had previously taught and believed.

So this is the problem in the church in Antioch, and the very same problem was now manifesting itself in

the church of Galatia as well. But before we move on to the deeper problem of the heart that this problem in the church reflected, let's consider our own situation. In some ways, it is not very different. Sadly, our Christian communities continue to reflect the same degree of divisiveness as that ancient church. At this very moment, all over this city hundreds of congregations are worshipping: blacks with blacks, whites with whites, Koreans with Koreans, Hispanics with Hispanics. Many people have heard the statement that Sunday morning is the most segregated time of the week in North America.

Is this really such a big deal? If we are listening to Paul carefully, we will understand that our racial segregation is not only a social issue, but also a spiritual one. Our division actually denies the gospel of Jesus Christ and hinders the gospel's proclamation. We may not *feel* like racists: in our politically-correct society, few of us lash out in violence against someone of another race or even say anything disparaging. But the *fact* of the racial segregation within the church and the society at large exposes a deep, pervasive problem that has its roots in long-standing racial tensions. Here, African-American Christians may be able to see more clearly than white Christians. John Perkins, the founder of Voice of Calvary Ministries in Jackson, MS, writes this: "[Black people] saw and felt oppression in a thousand ways. And not always open brutality either. It's the system, the whole structure of economic and social cages that have neatly boxed the black man in so that 'nice' people can join the oppression without getting their hands dirty – just by letting things run along."¹ *Just by letting things run along.* Perkins is saying that by going to church, worshipping and communing with people only of our race, we are serving to prop up a whole cultural system that degrades fellow human beings and is based on exclusion. This practice is not based on the gospel of freedom, but is based instead on cultural ways of doing things that we have accepted and incorporated into our worship.

Even when we recognize this racial division as grievous, it is very difficult to act upon it. In college I was a part of a group that was committed to overcoming the racial disunity among the Christian fellowship groups at the university. Though I felt so zealous for this cause, I found that in my heart I continued to experience fear and even resistance when it came to actually communicating and worshipping with those of other races. I felt bound by the structural and historical ruts we were stuck in as a community, but more so I felt

bound by the sin and opposition in my own heart. This problem in the heart is what we turn to next.

Paul doesn't just deal with the problem in the church: he goes way deeper to deal with the problem in the human heart that is the source of the division. Paul states what he believes to be the basic source of this division in the church in verse 14: Peter was "not acting in line with the truth of the gospel." What does he mean by this? Paul reminded them that he had clearly proclaimed the gospel to them, a message he succinctly summarized in 4:3-4: "...we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption as children." Prior to trusting in Jesus Christ, our lives are marked by slavery: we are bound to continually seeking to prove or justify ourselves before God and others by what we do. Whether it is how good we are, how sincere and pious we are, how beautiful we are, or how much we can achieve, our lives are caught in an enslaving cycle of depending on our own work and effort for self-worth and acceptance before God. But God has sent his Son Jesus Christ to rescue us, to give us freedom. He sets us free to live by grace! There is nothing more we have to do to prove ourselves before God to make him love us more, for everything that was necessary for us to do and be has been accomplished by Jesus Christ. He has lived the life we should have lived; he has died the death we should have died. When we trust in him alone, we are free.

So what Paul is saying in verse 14 is this: Peter was not living consistently with this radical gospel of freedom, for the way he was treating fellow Christians was not in accord with the message he confessed. Why not? How does racial and ethnic division in the church reflect a distortion of the gospel? We can discern two reasons Paul identifies: First, there was an *internal, personal distortion*. Paul says Peter was being a "hypocrite" (v. 15). Paul accuses Peter of freely living like a Gentile because he knew God accepted him on the basis of Christ's works and not his own, and then turning around and demanding that the Gentile believers adopt Jewish cultural standards to be truly accepted. He was saying, "Yes, Christ is sufficient for our life and salvation, but to be entirely accepted you also need *this*." Jesus plus something else. In Paul's mind, this was a horrible, personal distortion of the gospel, and by stating it in this way Paul exposes one of the roots of racism and racial segregation. For the root of racism is a denial of the gospel of grace. It is a perpetuation of

the belief that our worth and acceptance before God and others does not depend on Christ's work alone but on some distinction of our group or personhood, such as our skin color or social position. We human beings *desperately* need worth and self-justification, and one way to manufacture that self-esteem is by devising ways to feel superior to other people. This is at heart an attempt to base our worth on something other than Jesus Christ and his triumphant death and resurrection.

Secondly, racial division represents an *external, communal distortion*. In a difficult, oppressive pagan environment, Peter and the circumcision group saw the need for a stable sense of identity. They chose to establish that identity not in Jesus Christ (which in some ways is personally de-stabilizing) but in their particular Jewish cultural distinctiveness. This decision gave their group a sense of purpose and unity, but it was a unity that excluded and which ultimately denied Jesus Christ as Lord of the church. So what should communities be built on? One answer we find in the church follows the line we see Peter taking: discern something distinctive to our own community, attach spiritual significance to that particular cultural distinction or style of worship, and then use that distinction to make ourselves feel superior to others. This can result in strong unity, but it is unity based on a human distinction and is ultimately exclusionary. Another answer we find in the church focuses on the desire to embrace every race and culture without question, because, these churches claim, truth is ultimately relative and culturally determined. The problem with this view is that it is also based on some particular human distinction, this time being the demand that only people who are relativistic and tolerant are to be respected. This can result in the same degree of excluding superiority and self-righteousness as the other attitude reflects.

So what *should* our communities be built on? This leads to our final point: discerning a solution to the problems. The gospel's answer to the question of what our communities should be built on is clear: Jesus Christ alone. In the community of Jesus Christ, we don't have to create an identity for ourselves or manufacture self-esteem by comparing ourselves to other groups, because Jesus Christ has given us our complete identity before God and others. The gospel tells us that we are all equally broken and unclean without Christ, and we are all equally accepted and clean in him. No human distinction can uproot this community that is built on nothing but Jesus Christ and what he accomplished on the cross, for in this community "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female,

for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

But how does this Christ-centered vision for community actually work out in our communities? I will mention three concrete things the gospel can do in our situations.

First, the gospel gives us courage to combat racism and racial segregation. Paul notes in verse 12 that Peter was "afraid" of the pressure put upon him by the circumcision group. Fear is one of the things that most frequently prevents us from associating with people of other races. We fear for our identity, that our own selves will be diminished. We fear our safety, that our own power will be displaced. Or we fear because of pressure from others. It is easy to feel that we must just go along with the way things have always been done, the way the suburbs are arranged, the way our cities are racially organized. But Paul, in an amazingly empowered way that can only come from the gospel, is able to rise above these fears because he has such a penetrating awareness of God's loving acceptance that he is no longer trying to "please people" (Gal. 1:10). He knows the only pair of eyes in the universe that matter are looking upon him with such affection and favor that all the other eyes upon him that may condemn or criticize are insignificant.

Second, the gospel gives us not only courage but also power. Notice that Paul didn't just say to Peter, "Repent of the sin of racism." Instead Paul went to the root: he reminded Peter that he had forgotten how graciously God had welcomed him at the point when he was doing and believing all the wrong things. Look what power the gospel brings us! We can respond with real power of the Holy Spirit to overcome racial segregation in our churches not out of guilt, because it is something we *must* do, but out of love, joy, and overflowing desire, because it is something the love of Christ motivates us to do. In verse 20 Paul states, "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me." When we remember that Jesus was excluded and rejected as no other person in the world has ever had to endure in order that we might be received into God's family, and when the Spirit unites us with the risen life of Jesus, we are empowered to love and embrace those that are different from ourselves.

This has been liberating for me personally. I have continued to battle fear and resistance in my heart, but as I have come to understand the gospel's implications on my life more fully, I have begun to realize that the

only way God can use me to overcome the racial division in the church is by admitting that racism is not some nebulous structural evil “out there,” but is a reality in *my own heart*, which reflects a deep self-righteousness and a denial of Jesus Christ as Savior. When I see that my racism is a violation not so much of God’s *rules* but of God’s *grace* in Jesus Christ, then I am able to remember how much Christ has loved me, and I am empowered to sincerely love my brothers and sisters and genuinely seek unity. “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love,” Paul writes. Faith in Jesus Christ, trusting in him alone for our worth and acceptance, empowers us to demonstrate the radical freeing quality of our message in actual relationships.

Finally, the gospel gives us a new future. Where we are heading will determine what we are doing now. As Paul says at the very end of this book: “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.” Through the cross of Jesus Christ, God is bringing about a whole new world, a kingdom where Jesus Christ is king and in which people from all tribes, all nations, and all ethnicities will be gathered together. As Christians in the here and now, we are pilgrims heading toward that new creation. As Miroslav Volf writes, “a pilgrim is not defined primarily by the land or culture through which he or she is traveling, but by the place toward which he or she is on the way: his or her primary identity comes from the *destination*, not from any point along the journey.”² If death is the end, then why not live with those who are just like us? But if the end is God’s new creation, then let’s model together now what this world will one day be.



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¹ John Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1976), 200.

² Miroslav Volf, “The Healthy Church: Embodying Diversity”, *Catalyst*, vol. 9, no. 3 (March 2003), 5.

Running the Third Leg

by Audrey Thompson

Sermon Text: II Timothy 1:2-7

“To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice; and I am persuaded is in you also. Therefore, I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

I love the black church. I love the music—the singing and the clapping, the dancing and the shouting. I love black preaching—the preaching of a John Jasper, who defied scientific findings of the 19th century and declared with ungrammatical profundity, “The Sun Do Move!” I love the preaching of a Dr. Martin Luther King, who had the audacity to declare, “I have a dream.” It is fascinating to me how blacks used prayers, songs, and sermons to transcend this mean ‘ol nasty world of oppression, and dared to see themselves as something “other”—something other than slaves and niggers, something other than inferior. I love the black church for what it has meant for black life and survival, not only in America but also throughout the Diaspora. Though varied in religious expression and spiritual understanding, the souls of black folk have found refuge *in the church*. Our cries against injustice were voiced *in the church*. Our individual and collective identity was formed *in the church*. When we look back and wonder how we got over, we see *the church*. We’ve come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord!

Now where we go from here, depends on us. To be sure, there is much at stake. It's been forty years since King gave his infamous *I Have A Dream* speech, and we are *still* one nation under God divided! Divided *still* by racial and socio-economic lines. Sunday is *still* the most segregated day of the week. If you're black, you *still* have to work twice as hard to get half as much. There are *still* more black men in prison than in college. Though black women make up more than half the church membership, we are *still* denied leadership roles in our congregations. *Still*, the black church is virtually silent on the issues of homosexuality and mental illness. Our schools are *still* in trouble. Our neighborhoods are *still* in trouble. As the future leaders of the church, as we prepare to take our place and make our mark on this faith tradition, to these issues we must respond. When we assume the pastorate and step into the pulpit, we will have to say something. We will have to do something!

The reality is that there is a vested interest in our failure. There are negative forces at work, counting on us not making it, counting on us to choose self-interest over salvation, to choose fame and fortune over freedom! The bet is that we'll give up and throw in the towel, that we'll become overwhelmed and frustrated by a system we had nothing to do with creating. Lauryn Hill captures the point like this, "...it seems we lose the game before we even start to play!" What game? The game of life, the race, if you will. This is about survival! And if we are not careful and intentional, we can and will lose.

Our text is a letter addressed to a young man whose name is Timothy. And like us, Timothy was in a leadership position during what was, according to history, a very difficult time for Christians and the church. On top of outsiders fighting against the church, rumors were now spreading that all efforts to live right were in vain, because Jesus had already returned. People in the church were gossiping and fighting amongst themselves. Some even decided to leave the church. There was an overcast of doubt, frustration, helplessness and hopelessness. Quite naturally, Timothy began to feel anxious and weary. And somebody sent him a letter, a word of encouragement. The sole intent and only motive here is to inspire, and to lift up a young leader trying to do the right thing!

At the end of verse 3, the letter reads, "I remember you in my prayers night and day." What we see here, at least on the part of this writer, is a display of the level of maturity I'm striving for personally and hoping for communally: where when we see into the lives and

ministries of our fellow colleagues and discern some things that are not quite right, that it not become the subject of lunch-time gossip, but the substance of intimate/heartfelt prayer. The song says, "I pray for you, you pray for me. I love you. I need you to survive. I won't harm you with words from my mouth. I love you. I need you to survive."

It is verse 5 that I want to focus on: "when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also." Basically, the writer says, "Come now Timothy, remember who you are!" It's a terrible thing to forget who you are, to forget the examples set by those who have lived before you. In the movie, *The Lion King*, when Simba forgets who he is, he hangs out with those he normally would have defeated and eaten. He begins to eat their food and sing their songs. Too many of our leaders have forgotten who they are! They've made companions of the status quo and they eat of the food of commodification.

When you know who you are, you can't lead any 'ol kind of way, you can't preach any 'ol kind of sermon. Jesus said that you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free! Timothy, remember who you are! You're not just like everybody else. You come from good stock! Whatever you need, it's already in you, and I know it 'cause you get it from your mama! We ought to thank God for our foremothers and fathers who lived their faith! If they sang on Sunday, I will trust in the Lord until I die, they meant it and they lived it. So, by mid-week when door after door closed in their faces and when the forces of oppression would have conquered the strongest soul, they sang a new song, "I know the Lord will make a way somehow!"

The key to the survival of our people is right here in this verse: grandmama ran the race well, fought the good fight of faith, then she passed it on to mama, and then mama passed it on to Timothy. Just like in a relay race, Timothy was running the third leg. The future, the outcome of the race, depended on how well he would do on the third leg. I learned some things about a relay race. First, you should know that every relay race has four legs. Four runners per team run the distance around a circular track. Runner one runs about 100 meters and passes it on to runner two. Runner two runs a little bit further, about 125 meters, and passes the baton to runner three. Then, runner three runs about another 125 meters and passes it on to runner four. Runner four runs the last 100 meters and takes the final leg to the finishing line. I learned that the runner who takes the third leg must be skilled at receiving and

handing off the baton. This runner must be able to endure long distances and must be excellent at running around curves.

My sisters and brothers, my colleagues in ministry, you and I are running the third leg. The first and second legs have already been run. We must now carry the baton of faith to the future generation. If we're going to win this race as a nation, as a people, as a church, much depends on how we run this leg. Much depends on how excellent we are at running the curves of life. The curves of life are frustrating and sometimes we may want to give up, but the dream of yesterday depends on us. Dr. Hanson and Dr. Paris haven't struggled to pave the way, for us to give up *now*! Mama and daddy didn't pray all day and night for us to stop running *now*! Our ancestors didn't endure all of the whiplashes, the hangings, and the heat of the cotton fields, so we could simply throw in the towel *now*! We are the reason they have existed at all. We must succeed! And like my grandmama says, "We've got to keep on keepin' on, and never give up!"

Timothy hit a curve and wanted to throw in the towel, but God had somebody write a letter to let him know that he was being prayed for, and to remind him that he came from good stock! Timothy was reminded that the faith of his grandmother and the faith of his mother, that same faith was also in him. Let me remind you that we come from a long line of fighters, from a people who endured the worst of conditions and survived! Let the record show that what was in them is also in you. We come from good stock! And if we are to be victorious in this race, we must be able to receive and hand off the baton of our faith tradition. We must endure the distance and be excellent at running around curves. Just know that the race is not given to swift, nor to the strong, but to he who endures. So, when you hit a few curves (and you will), when things attempt to knock you off your feet (and they will), just know that somebody is praying for you. Our ancestors are standing in the heavenly bleachers, calling out your name that you might remember who you are. Who are you? You are and I am "Destiny's Child." "We are survivors!" Stir up the gift that is in you, and run on to see what the end will be. Run on with power, run with love, run with sound mind. Runners! On your mark...get set...GO!



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Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors

By Cedric C. Johnson

Sermon Text: Ephesians 2:14-15

For He Himself is our peace, our bond of unity and harmony; in His flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down and destroyed the dividing wall, that is, the fence between us, having abolished in His flesh the hostility caused by the Law with its commandments and ordinances, that in the place of the two, He might create in Himself one new humanity, thus making peace.

Every time that I log on to America Online, the first thing that I encounter is a "pop up" ad that invites me to sign up for their "high-speed" internet service. Because their high-speed network is always connected, I discovered that I would also need to install a "firewall." A "firewall" is software that is meant to protect your computer from outsiders and prevent unauthorized people from getting access to your system. Interestingly, it appears that even in the "internet age," the old adage still applies: "Good firewalls, I mean, good fences make good neighbors."

In our text we encounter another "wall" that many believed also served to protect one's identity and prevent unauthorized access by outsiders. In verse 14 the writer of Ephesians speaks of "the dividing wall between us." The phrase "dividing wall" literally means a wall erected through the middle of an area to keep apart those on either side. Here we see the image of a barrier, a "firewall" if you will, that separated and alienated the Jews from the Gentiles. This "wall" is seen as holding apart entire communities of people in suspicion and distrust of one another. In the first century, strict social codes prohibited the Jews from eating with, marrying, and in many cases having casual contact with the Gentiles. For the Jews, there was no salvation outside of the covenantal community of Israel and Gentiles did not belong to that community. But the very "wall" which protected the religious identity of a people had become to the apostles and the first communities of Christians a source of schism; the "fence" which prevented the infiltration of false teachings had become a source of contention.

On the other hand, for the Greeks, anyone who was unable to speak their language was despised and also subject to social and physical barriers. Aristotle himself is known to have considered non-Greeks as barbarians. Gentiles would often regard Jews with great suspicion and indulge in anti-Jewish prejudice. Both groups were thus responsible for the wall of separation that existed

between them. The dividing wall, this seemingly insurmountable fence, stood impervious to penetration!

Billy Graham has stated that, "Racial and ethnic hostility [and I would add hostility regarding gender and sexual orientation,] is the foremost social problem facing our world today."¹ Rev. Graham went on to state that the Church has contributed to this tragic scene. The Church has contributed with an "indifference and resistance by Christians who are intolerant toward those of other backgrounds."² It has been asserted that Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. is in fact the *most* segregated time in America. I am saddened by the fact that I would add lunchtime in MacKay to that list! Sadly, even here at Princeton Theological Seminary, the self-imposed segregated seating arrangements of African American, Asian, white Southern Baptist, PCUSA and other students, reflect the ongoing challenges that we all face in overcoming these seemingly impervious social, cultural and religious walls! It is truly frightening to consider that here, at one of the most prestigious centers of theological training in the world, where some of the brightest minds in the country are being shaped for ministry in the 21st century, many of us yet stand behind the walls of race, gender, sexual orientation and denominational affiliation. Yes, unfortunately, even here at Princeton Theological Seminary we see a microcosm of the barriers and intolerance that plague our larger society.

However, the good news conveyed in our text is that Christ has broken down and destroyed this dividing wall; Christ has abolished the fence that stood between Jew and Gentile. The human walls of separation have been torn down. Because of Christ's redeeming work, Jews and Gentiles are now joined together. "In His flesh He has made both groups into one." Jesus' death on the cross was the means of reconciliation. For Christ Himself is our peace, our bond of unity and harmony!

In Pauline theology, "peace" conveys a twofold imagery of a double reconciliation: the first is reconciliation to God. The second dimension is the peace that unites women and men across cultural, social and religious divides. Christ, in His death, has dissolved the schism between those who become Christians. In His flesh *Christ has made both groups into one new humanity!* Jew and Gentile have not just been brought into a mutual relationship, they have been made one in a unity where both are no longer what they previously were. In accomplishing this, the work of Christ transcended one of the fundamental barriers of the first century world.

Since August 12, 1961 another wall had stood as a barrier that divided a people. Twenty-six miles of con-

crete slabs, stacked ten feet tall, cut through the city and the hearts of the people of Berlin. For nearly thirty years the Berlin Wall separated family members who resided on either side. As a result, parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors were caused great pain and anguish. For nearly thirty years they were unable to talk about how each other were doing; for nearly thirty years they were unable to watch each other grow and mature. For nearly thirty years, wonderful opportunities to be enriched and strengthened at family reunions had been missed! For nearly thirty years, wonderful opportunities to access the support of a vast family network were lost!

Many of us residing on different sides of denominational, racial and other walls are also missing wonderful opportunities. Wonderful opportunities for Pentecostals and Presbyterians to see how each other have grown and how we can be enriched by one another; wonderful opportunities to be benefited by the vibrancy and unique voice of women; wonderful opportunities for conversation and honest reflection about the issues of race, gender and sexual orientation - Wonderful opportunities to stand united in a common demand for world peace and social justice!

The Berlin Wall stood for nearly thirty years and most people thought that it too was a permanent fixture, a stark reality that just had to be tolerated. But the winds of revolution sweep across Eastern Europe in the late 1980's and challenged long standing political and social structures, and before we knew it, on the evening of November 9, 1989, the seemingly impervious Berlin Wall was destroyed.

In Christ, what seems impossible has also *already* been done! The barriers have already been torn down. In fact, in Christ there is nothing left out of which to build divisions. For the redemptive work of Christ does not simply have individualistic and eschatological implications. *The Christ event is also a revolutionary social and political event in the here and now!* It is an event which marks the overcoming and ending of barriers, however deeply founded and highly constructed they appear to be. Cultures and classes that had been separated by the walls prejudice, tradition and intolerance are now open to one another; "high speed" lines of connection, access and conversation are now established.

This message of reconciliation is one of God's surest to our fractured society. In a world divided by heavily fortified "firewalls," let each of us be peacemakers. Let each of us have the courage to walk in the revolutionary social and political reality that Christ has

established. Let each of us be intentional about developing opportunities for conversation and cooperation across the barriers that divide this world. Let each of us proclaim, in word and in deed, the social and political reality of our redemption in the various parishes, ministries and institutions in which we find ourselves.

The Church is called to be a new reconciled society in which barriers, walls and fences are not tolerated. We are called to love our neighbors as ourselves, regardless of race, religion or gender. God intends that the Church be a model of what the human community looks like when it comes under His rule of righteousness and peace. For among the people of God, “Good fences make *bad* neighbors!”



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¹ Bruce W. Fong, “Addressing the Issue of Racial Reconciliation According to the Principles of Ephesians 2:11-22,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, p. 565.

² *Ibid.*

Reviews

On Being Black and Reformed: A New Perspective on the African-American Christian Experience.

By Anthony J. Carter

P & R Press, 2003. 153 pages.

Reviewed by Touré Cabral Marshall

Anthony J. Carter broaches a subject that is quietly yet intensely present in the hearts and minds of many African American Christians within the Reformed faith tradition. The question Carter addresses in *On Being Black and Reformed* is one of identity, particularly the relationship between the African American cultural perspective and Reformed faith. After probing, searching, and reflecting on the history of both the Reformed faith and the African American experience, Carter concludes that not only is it possible for African Americans to be part of the Reformed tradition but that African Americans *should* be a part of the Reformed Christian tradition. The foundation of his position is the concept of the sovereignty of God, as it is prominently situated within Reformed theology. Carter argues that this theological perspective offers clarity and meaning to the African American experience, particularly the historical legacy of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Carter's writing style is fluid and coherent. He demonstrates sensitivity to and awareness of an issue that has produced much anxiety and uncertainty. The issue addressed is how African Americans understand themselves as Christian given the history of North American Christianity's involvement in and support of a slave system that victimized and slaughtered millions of Africans.

To develop his case for the relevancy of Reformed theology for African Americans, Carter attempts in chapter one to address the existent Black Theology. He asks the question, "Do we need a Black Theology?" His own answer to this question is a qualified "yes." Carter believes that though we need a Black Theology, it must be biblically and theologically sound. In his view, the need for a Black Theology is an unfortunate reality, brought about by the hegemony of white, male theological perspectives. According to Carter, Black Theology is a "reaction to the theology of Western Christianity, dominated by white males, [that] has had scant if any direct answers to the evils of racism and the detrimental effect of institutionalized discrimination" (6).

Subsequent to demonstrating the need for such theology, the author argues that Black Theology must interpret Scripture, history, tradition, and Christian experience in order for it to be considered sound and biblical. Carter understands Reformed theology to be both, and in chapter two, the tenets of Reformed theology are gracefully laid out: the five points of Calvinism, the sovereignty of God, the sinfulness of humans, and the sufficiency of Christ. This exposition of the tenets of the Reformed position is one of the clearest, most concise, and yet most comprehensive elucidations that I have encountered.

Chapter three, "The Church from Chains," is about the origins of the African American church, an enigma whose existence, writes the author, is unlikely and unpredictable. In revisiting the history and origins of the African American church, Carter finds it to be a "testimony to the sovereignty of God and also an indictment upon those who engaged in the Atlantic slave trade and those who refused to openly welcome their newly converted African brothers and sisters into their fellowship" (45). From this position the author reveals with substantial and compelling documentation the historical nature of the relationship between White and African American Christians. This relationship he describes as having four moves: 1) the *Onslaught of Slavery*, 2) the *Evangelical Negligence* in which white Christians refused to evangelize or convert slaves, 3) *Evangelical Diligence* as the concerted effort of white Christians to evangelize Africans while continuing to support the existing "slavocracy" and finally, 4) *Evangelical Division*, exemplified by Richard Allen's experience of rejection at St. George's, and his subsequent founding of the AME church (50ff).

Carter asserts that through the lens of Reformed theology, African American Christians can better understand experiences of suffering. In short, because Reformed theology offers "a clear picture of God sovereignly working within the realm of sinful humans to bring about the existence of a dynamic church and, more importantly, the redemption of all those who believe", it is useful to African American Christians (62). Finally, the personal stories of Horatio Spafford and Thomas Dorsey suggest for Carter a common heritage, respectively, between White American and African American Christians. Songs written by these two men are now standard hymns in the American Christian Church, and both reflect significant suffering.

Spafford wrote “It Is Well with My Soul” after losing all four of his daughters to a tragic ship accident in the Atlantic Ocean. Thomas Dorsey, the author of “Precious Lord, Take My Hand”, wrote his hymn after the death of his young wife and newborn son (62ff). Through these two stories, Carter attempts to draw on a universal experience of suffering. However, I found this concluding thought to be out of focus with the issue of African American Christian experience. While the examples he provides do speak to loss, suffering, and vulnerability in the face of forces beyond human control, the system of slavery was a deliberately designed scheme. There is a particularity and a deliberateness regarding the history of African American Christians’ experience in slavery (and White Christians’ involvement in the system) which analogies such as his do not account for. In the end, Carter does not adequately address how Reformed theology can speak to such very particular and very real dynamics.

In chapter four, Carter explains how the experience of being Black and Reformed can and does come about. He begins by stating that the common articulation of Reformed theology, as written and espoused from a white male hegemony, is not inherently wrong but revealing in its incompleteness. By and large, Reformed theology has failed to recognize and consider the African American experience. To illustrate what such an interaction might look like, Carter borrows an example from the theologian Carl Ellis Jr. Ellis believes that just as traditional, classical theology may be compared to classical music, so biblical Black Theology is not unlike jazz. Theologians of a Reformed perspective may find in this meeting that the African American experience both extends and deepens their pre-existing understanding of God (75). Carter also appeals to history for insight, finding precedent for such a union in the work of Lemuel Haynes, an African American pastor and theologian in post-revolutionary New England who located Reformed theology in the African American experience during the time of slavery (76).

Finally, in chapter five Carter states that African Americans should embrace a Reformed theological understanding because African American Christians should see their experience and existence as being ordained by God, according to his plan and for his glory. Carter’s position rests on the concept of the sovereignty of God; therefore all suffering is understood and explained through this theological lens. African Americans should eagerly embrace Reformed theology because it aligns with everything that the African

American church has sought to be: biblical, historical, and experiential. Overall, *On Being Black and Reformed* is a work that makes the case for African Americans being able to maintain a sense of cultural identity and cultural integrity within the Reformed tradition. Carter’s argument is compelling and well reasoned; he draws on history to support his position and gives substance to the stance that he takes.

One fundamental weakness of the book is the treatment of what Carter describes as *nascent Black Theology* and its theological and biblical unacceptability (5). Though Carter takes a definitive and hard line against it, he does surprisingly little to concretely identify and describe what this “Black Theology” is. By referring to *nascent Black Theology* as non-biblical and unsound, without offering up examples of how this is the case, I am left searching for how he has reached his conclusion. Particularly when specific theologians and works in this area are not mentioned or engaged—such as James H. Cone and his work *Biblical Revelation and Social Existence*, Robert A. Bennett’s *Biblical Theology and Black Theology*, Allan Boesak’s *The Courage to Be Black*, and Joseph A. Johnson Jr.’s *Jesus the Liberator*, to name a few—one wonders if Carter is completely aware of what *nascent Black Theology* has to offer the Reformed tradition. Does it not powerfully speak to the Black experience?

As an African American, second generation Presbyterian, I have personally wrestled with maintaining a sense of cultural integrity in the Reformed faith tradition. Other theologians have preceded Carter in attempting to address this very real concern, namely Gayraud Wilmore in his book *Black and Presbyterian: The Heritage and the Hope*. I think it would have been of great benefit for me and many others had Carter engaged this text in some manner, particularly since both authors deal with a similar issue, though in different ways. In the end, I was left searching for more critical interaction with other foundational texts.

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From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race

By J. Daniel Hays, Edited by D. A. Carson

InterVarsity Press, 2003. 240 pages.

Reviewed by Kenneth Ngwa

Within the context of racial tensions between Whites and Blacks in the United States (and there are equivalent and parallel tensions all over the world), the reality and legacy (and still sometimes, sadly, the experience) of racism contradict some of the most fundamental aspects of human rights. For Christians, the problem is compounded by the fact that racism constitutes an assault on those who are created in the image of God. Does the biblical material favor one race over another? What are some of the fruitful ways by which the issue of race can be meaningfully appropriated in the life and experience of the church, while at the same time challenging the mentality of racism? J. Daniel Hays' book, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*, is a useful introduction to the subject of racism and its place in biblical scholarship and the church.

Hays' book is a broad survey that covers both the Old and New Testaments, largely focusing on texts that either evoke the issue of race or envision an eschatological time when all peoples and nations will come together to worship YHWH as Lord of all creation. He begins by making reference to a Black professor who mentioned that the race problem "is the most important issue for the church today." Hays concurs but also observes a tension within academia: "Black scholars identify the racial division in the church as one of the most central problems for contemporary Christianity, while many White scholars are asking, 'What problem?'" (17). Hays then proceeds to describe this skeptical audience as consisting of three groups: a) those who are still entrenched in their inherited racism and are interested in the Bible if it reinforces their prejudiced views, b) those who assume that the Bible does not speak to the issue of race, and c) those who in their indifference assume that the status quo is acceptable and that the Bible supports their current practice (19). He then urges that we "set our cultural baggage aside in order to let scripture speak to us clearly" (21).

Sometimes through the media and scholarly literature, Hays argues, the church has perpetuated the idea that there was a significant Caucasian involvement in the biblical story but no Black African involvement. This perception is erroneous and has fostered disas-

trous theologies within today's White church, theologies that have contributed to the continued, almost total, division of the North American church into Black and White (27). To counter this false perception and its negative effects on the church, Hays proceeds to broadly describe "the main ethnic groups that appear in scripture, so that we might better understand the context from which biblical ethnic references are made" (29). These groups include the Cushites (Black Africans), Egyptians, "Asiatics" (Israel and her cousins, the Canaanites, Edomites, Ammonites etc.), and the Indo-Europeans (Philistines and Hittites). It is hoped that, as a result, readers within the White church will recognize the Old Testament's multi-ethnic, non-Caucasian background. Such recognition is "a critical, foundational step in developing a truly biblical theology of race" (45).

The bulk of Hays' work is laid out in chapters three to nine, where he examines a number of key biblical texts that touch on issues of race and ethnicity in the Old and New Testaments. A few examples will suffice here. First, in his treatment of the creation of humankind in Genesis 1, Hays demonstrates that the image of God is not an affirmation of any particular race, but rather of all races and peoples. This understanding is crucial for how we perceive and treat others (45). Second, an exegesis of the so-called 'curse of Ham' in Genesis 9:18-27 further exposes "one of the most serious and most damaging misinterpretations of Scripture." Although some clergy have used this text to argue against racial equality, Hays points out that the curse, which is really a curse on Canaan, has nothing to do with race. Describing it in terms of racial conflict is untenable given the close ethnic affinity between Canaanites and Israelites. Rather, the curse has to do with the gods that the Canaanites worshipped (55). Finally, the table of nations in Genesis 10 shows that the common humanity that descended from Noah included Cushites (vv. 6-12), a Black African people. Hence, Black people were not a late addition to the Judeo-Christian story (60).

In the New Testament, Hays examines Jesus' own genealogy as it is found in Matthew 1. Citing the inclusion of "foreigners" such as Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba, Hays argues that intermarriage and the inclusion of Gentiles were part of the plan of God, which eventually served to challenge the cultural boundaries that existed within the church (159). Likewise, the story of the Good Samaritan teaches salvation for all nations. When placed within the overall context of the theology of Luke-Acts, this parable

destabilizes our inherited “Black-White” worldview and challenges us to move beyond our “us-them” mentality to an “us-us” unity in Christ that demolishes the boundaries of our society (171). Paul further underscores this in his writing to the Galatians (cf. 2:11-21 and 3:20-29) where past divisions are broken and all are justified by faith. Galatians 3:8-9 picks up on the divine promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that all nations will be blessed. Revelation 7:9 further speaks of people coming into the kingdom of God from every nation, tribe, people, and language. The thrust of such texts is that the inclusion of all nations into the community of God’s people was not an afterthought or a shift in God’s thinking, but rather it was part of God’s eternal plan from the beginning (193-199).

Overall, Hays’ volume provides a theological framework from which to examine issues of race within the church. On the one hand, there is God’s promise to Abraham to bless all the nations of the earth, which is partly translated into the eschatological vision of the future kingdom in which all the nations come to acknowledge and worship YHWH. Isaiah’s vision of the future (2:2-4) depicts God’s people as “decidedly multinational” (107). There were also intermarriages with foreigners who were racially different (cf. Ex. 2:15-22 and Num. 12). How does one explain Biblical prohibitions against intermarriage? Hays argues that such prohibitions were not based on race, but on issues of faith and theology. On the other hand, there were a number of developments in Israel’s history that demonstrated the inclusion of other people into this community of worshippers. These events include individual acts of piety manifested by non-Israelites such as Phinehas the priest (cf. Num. 25:6-14; Ps. 106: 28-31) and Ebed-Melech the Cushite (cf. Jer. 38)—acts that show their involvement within the community of God’s people. Finally, Hays shows that there was a significant Cushite military and political presence in the ancient Near East prior to, during and after the monarchy. Within that complex geo-political relation, the Cushites were sometimes allies and sometimes enemies (ch. 5). The Black Africans in the Bible were, therefore, “prototypical” of the relationship that God has with other nations just as with Israel. As “prototypical people”, Black Africans underscore the multi-ethnic and even “multi-colored” view which the Old Testament paints of God’s worshippers. Cush represents the “paradigm for the inclusion of foreign people into the people of God” (129). This is further underscored by the presence of the “mixed group” among the Israelites during the time of the Exodus (cf. Ex. 12:37-39). Hays’ chal-

lenge to the church is pointed: “For the church today to continue to divide along racial lines and to continue to maintain a racial division is to be out of step with the prophetic picture of God’s future plan” (116).

In part, being culturally, linguistically, and physically different from one another is what makes us who we are as God’s creation. Being racially different is a beautiful thing. The danger comes when we try to turn the beauty of being different into a stumbling block, when being distinct is taken to mean being divisive and dangerous, when we feel that our existence as a race (or tribe, as the case may be) is to be expressed at the expense of another. The result is unnecessary tension between faith and race, between religious identity and ethnic identity, sometimes with the latter exerting unbearable pressure on the former with unfortunate consequences.

The table of nations in Genesis 10, the Pentecost experience in Acts 2, and the future kingdom visualized by John in Revelation 7 may be reversals of the experience of the Tower of Babel, as Hays rightly notes. However, these experiences will not return us to a time when “all the earth had one language and a common speech” (Gen. 11:1). Rather, they depict a community in which all people participate. The distinctive characteristics and features of the different races are redeemed and utilized in the worship of God, as the community of God’s people opens out toward the rest of the world. Surely, the multi-ethnic and multi-national character of the biblical material that Hays sometimes portrays as “background” to ancient Israel is really at the forefront. Although Hays’ description of the cultural context of the ancient Near East is sophisticated and accurate, it seems to me that his description of the contemporary church is not as sophisticated. In other words, while he has clearly deprived racism of any religious or biblical foundation through his careful exegesis, I found myself wishing Hays had spent equal time expounding the multi-national and multi-ethnic component of the church today. Surely, the contemporary church has her “mixed” group.

I believe that the issue of race has two components, one variable and the other invariable. The variable component deals with both material and immaterial aspects of culture. This includes beliefs and customs, language, food, clothing, worship, liturgical styles, and the like. Such aspects of a culture can be influenced and altered, some more than others. To the extent that racism is fueled by faulty beliefs, there is the urgent

need to alter such beliefs and replace them with accurate and constructive ones. Hays' exegesis and argumentation come through as highly effective. There is also what I consider to be the invariable component of a race, however, and it deals with such things as skin color. Jeremiah recognized this invariable component when he asked in 13:23, "Can the Cushite change her/his skin?" (Although Hays notes this proverb, he does not fully develop its implications.) The challenge for us is to combine the variable and invariable aspects of our racial make-up as we interact with one another. Here, the rainbow imagery may be helpful. The rainbow is made up of distinct colors, but at the borderlines between these colors there is contact and interaction. As one moves away from the border inwards, the colors appear more distinct and separate from each other. If one sees the core areas as representing the invariable component of race and the border areas as representing the flexible domain of the variables, then a perception of the church emerges in which both interaction between the different races and the acceptance of their unique features is upheld. Through such unity and diversity, every race is affirmed and racism is denied.

The challenge for the church is to continually look for ways to deprive racism of the power to deny God's people the right to celebrate the different races that make up the community. Hays' book lays the theological groundwork for fruitful discussion and growth in the church and will serve as an eye-opening and necessary challenge for those who are interested in celebrating our many races and one faith.

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United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race.

By Curtiss P. DeYoung, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim
Oxford University Press, 2003. 222 pages.

Reviewed by Sam Houston

I was speaking recently with a lay leader of a Presbyterian church about a vision for a multiracial congregation. A part of a predominately white, upper-middle class congregation, she couldn't help but be overwhelmed with a sense of powerlessness in the face of such an endeavor. She is not alone in her reaction to this daunting task of racial reconciliation, a task with which both the church and our country are now confronted. Many have described the defining social issue of the twentieth century as that of race. Now in the twenty-first century, the church in America is in a unique position to adequately address this issue which has been so painfully neglected. In *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race*, three sociologists and a theologian set out to provide a theological and axiological framework to accomplish this needed undertaking. This book is the sequel to *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford University Press, 2000), where Michael Emerson investigates the ways in which theology, history, and the very structure of religious organizations have combined to divide Christians in the United States along racial lines (3). *United by Faith* offers the multiracial congregation as a compelling solution to the problem of race, not only in the church in America but in America itself. Its thesis: when possible, a Christian congregation should be multiracial (a congregation is defined as multiracial when no one group comprises more than 80 percent of the church body).

The authors begin by demonstrating how a biblical precedent for the multiracial congregation may be found in the ministry of Jesus Christ and in the early church. Although first century notions of race differed in many ways from our own, distinctions based on personal and societal understandings of ethnicity and culture were a reality. Jesus Christ, as an outsider and member of the Galilean ethnic minority, overturned prevailing views of ethnicity which judged people according to their ethnic background. He accomplished this through his radical embrace and inclusion of those relegated to the peripheries of Jewish society by including Gentiles, tax collectors, and women in his ministry.

The early church also strove to achieve multiracial congregations. The book of Acts shows that, from its very inception, the church was multiracial. At Pentecost, the church grew from 120 Galilean Jews to 3,000 multicultural/multilingual Jews, and it received thousands more in the following days. The church at Antioch of Syria, founded shortly thereafter, provided the first model wherein Jews and Gentiles formed one coherent faith community. Despite the difficulties encountered, the early church was able to form multiracial congregations; however, as the authors point out, their inclusiveness decreased when the church became more aligned with the Roman Empire and the culture of the elite (37).

The authors of *United by Faith* devote similar attention to the history of the church in America. It is important to note, for example, that though the spirit of inclusion did break through systemic white racism for fleeting moments, again and again this spirit was consumed by overwhelming waves of prejudice. Brief periods of racial reconciliation occurred as a result of the Great Awakening in the eighteenth century, Reconstruction in the nineteenth century, and the Pentecostal movement in the twentieth century, but as was stated above, these congregations succumbed to the wider cultural attitudes in which racial prejudice reigned supreme. Although Protestant denominations represent the focus of this discussion, the racial prejudices and resulting uniraical congregations found within the Roman Catholic Church are discussed as well.

The authors then go on to discuss the embarrassingly small number of white Protestant and Catholic congregations who participated in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Despite this failure, a select number of congregations in America have been formed over the past 60 years which give hope to those who dream of multiracial congregations. These few congregations model today what racial reconciliation can look like. Focusing on four congregations which represent a wide range of denominational, geographic, and socioeconomic backgrounds—from the Riverside Church of New York City to the St. Pius X Catholic Church of Beaumont, Texas—the authors put forth models, not to be imitated, but to show the feasibility of such a project.

In contrast, there are many who see a greater value in uniraical congregations, and the authors recognize that some whites believe uniraical congregations to be more conducive to evangelism. Furthermore, many racial minorities find uniraical congregations appealing because they preserve cultural identities, whether

Native American, African American, or Asian American. An additional challenge is that the cultures of the white majority and the racial minorities are often perceived as being irreconcilable. While affirming the concerns that accompany these arguments, the authors address each issue, providing pragmatic, theological, activist, cultural, and sociological reasons to justify the legitimacy of multiracial congregations.

According to *United by Faith*, a theology of oneness must be put forth in order to lay a proper theological/theoretical foundation for both action and the sustaining of a multiracial church. This requires a radical paradigm shift in one's worldview where the inherent oneness of humanity, as it was first intended and later reaffirmed by Christ, is upheld. DeYoung and his colleagues believe that racial reconciliation has already been accomplished in Christ; we have only to live according to this new reality. Furthermore, the authors recognize that this worldview should move to a deeper level of "core belief" where it exists on an emotional and intuitive level (156). Only as a result of a theology of oneness, where all races and cultures are welcomed, will a hybrid, congregational culture be created. The Latino term *mestizaje*, used to refer to the synthesis of Spanish, Amerindian, and African cultures, is a good example of such integration. The ideal here is not one of assimilation, i.e. to become *one and the same*. Rather, the goal is cultural integration, whereby we are united through mutual respect for our differences (139). The authors finish their work with an explication of how a congregation may apply these theological insights in such areas as teaching, worship, and fellowship, addressing the barriers that might be encountered along the way.

While the strengths of the book are numerous, there are some deficiencies. In articulating a theology of oneness, one wonders why a more Trinitarian basis was not used. In the Trinity, one finds the ultimate Christian expression of unity in separation. In past theological work, the Trinity has provided a solid foundation from which to develop a theology of community where diversity is embraced without being squelched. In failing to incorporate a more Trinitarian framework into a theology of oneness, the authors have left a theological treasure chest unopened. Additionally, the role of prayer and the Holy Spirit in developing a theology of oneness as a "core belief" was lacking. Reliance on the Holy Spirit in achieving a multiracial congregation is mentioned, but left underdeveloped. For example, a robust pneumatology would provide the mechanism needed for committing a theology of oneness to the

interior depths of the human being as a “core belief.”

United by Faith exposes many of the issues of race that still plague the church in America today. One of the defining characteristics of the American psyche is race. Conflicts involving racial/cultural differences have been a part of American history since its founding and are expressed through such morally suspect ideas as “manifest destiny.” Race played an integral role in the defining event in the formation of the United States – the Civil War– and it was the lack of an adequate treatment of the racial quandary at that time which necessitated the Civil Rights movement a century later. From an historical perspective, one can see that the problem of race has always existed as an element of the American narrative and although progress has been made, there still exists a great chasm between where the church stands today and the goal of racial reconciliation given by Jesus Christ.

I believe that it is also important to recognize that racial reconciliation is not an end in itself but a means to authentic community. Our understanding of racial reconciliation must come from the goal toward which it is oriented, that of a people comprised of members from every tribe and nation, gathering together to live lives of worship in honor of Jesus Christ. In order to achieve this goal, the acts and attitudes of those who have played a part in racial discord (either actively or passively) must be addressed and atoned for; these acts cannot simply be glossed over, for this will only bring about a sense of reconciliation for a portion of those involved and therefore will not be reconciliation at all.

As *United by Faith* attests, the church, in its conformity to the wider cultural mores of bigotry and prejudice, has many sins for which it must seek forgiveness. While this is an undeniable truth, the church must also remember that it is the holy bride of Jesus Christ, God’s chosen people. Though the problem of race may seem overwhelming, the church should not despair. It is not on its own ability that the church must rely, but on the power given by Christ through the Holy Spirit. God will equip and empower all those to carry out what is desired by God, including racial reconciliation. The church, led and empowered by the Spirit, must take the lead in this task of healing and reconciliation and through its work provide a model for the rest of America and the world.

Through its elucidation of the problem of race faced by congregations in America today and its articulation of a theology of oneness, *United by Faith* offers a gripping diagnosis and a viable solution to the racial dilemma in America through the multiracial congrega-

tion. By demonstrating that cultural and racial integration are essential to what it means to be a Christian, *United by Faith* shows that if one has Christ, “everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Cor. 5:17).

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An Interview with Dr. Geddes W. Hanson

Regarding Issues of Race and Racism at PTS

Dr. Geddes Hanson is the Charlotte W. Newcombe Professor of Congregational Ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary. This interview was conducted on March 18, 2004, by M.Div. students John Pittard, Patrick Daymond, and Kevin Germer.

Dr. Hanson, tell us a little bit about your background, your education, and the process of coming to Princeton.

With regard to what we are talking about, there are several things that are noteworthy. First, I graduated from seminary before today's average M.Div. student was born. Second, I am not what the people in my family would call an American. I was born here, but I was raised by people who emigrated here a long time ago. My mother and father came here around the time of the First World War from colonial islands in the West Indies. I was raised in the urban North. I'm a product of the South Bronx and the New York school system, which at that stage of the game was the best school system in the world. It's not only that I'm older than most in the seminary—student or faculty—but that I started out somewhere else, and I've lived through a lot, and so I bring a different perspective to what goes on than a lot of folks do.

I did not do my M.Div. here; I went to Harvard Divinity School. When I was a college senior, a member of the presbytery of New York, and getting ready to go to seminary, the chairperson of what was then called the Committee on Candidates (now the Committee for the Preparation of Ministry) made it very clear to me that there was no place for me at Princeton Seminary—that the denomination had created two seminaries for “people like you”: Johnson C. Smith and Lincoln. As I told my colleagues years later, I've considered my coming to be a member of the faculty here my own left-handed kind of revenge.

In those days, almost all African-Americans went to a handful of traditional African-American colleges, and one also had to put a photograph on one's application. It didn't take rocket science to figure out who was what. The word on the street was that this was not a seminary policy. Rather, it was the practice of one person, who for a long period of time was responsible for admissions.

Had this unofficial admissions policy changed by the time you came here for doctoral work?

No, not that one could notice. There had been a sprinkling of African-Americans at the seminary in the years, say from the 1940s through the 1960s. When I got here there was one African-American senior and his family. He had been the only African-American here during his whole career.

So, there were no other African-American doctoral students here when you arrived?

No. As I understand the story, when Rev. James Andrews (who was at that time the assistant to Dr. Gillespie's predecessor, Dr. McCord) convinced President McCord that in order for the seminary to continue to entertain the notion that it was world-class institution, it was going to have to demonstrate an openness to preparing people for a wider church than just the Presbyterian denomination. In those days, the student body was between 80 and 90 percent Presbyterian. The M.Div. program was almost entirely male, and the only people of color were overseas students. Andrews raised the point that with the nature of the world society changing as it was, that kind of exclusiveness would no longer be considered a sign of world-class quality.

Consequently, there was a substantial number of African-American M.Div. students who came in at the same time that I came to the doctoral program. I like to say that it was the first time there were enough of us to have a party. There were three families and maybe about half a dozen individual males: about nine M.Div. candidates—a critical mass. Since then, the number of African-Americans here has fluctuated. One year, a member of the administration was standing in the dining room on the evening when the president introduces the faculty to the incoming class; she was reputed to have looked around and said, “My God, it's white in here.” We had graduated seventeen African-Americans that Spring; we had admitted seven that Fall. The population has continued to ebb and flow.

When you first arrived, there was this philosophical change that we need to be more diverse in our reach. Was that change only reflected in admissions, or was there also an institutional commitment to welcoming and assisting minority students who were coming in?

Not immediately; you've got to remember that Princeton is an American institution. It is good at doing

what American institutions do. It's not so good at doing what American institutions are not so good at doing. It pretty much reflects American society. One of the assumptions seems to be that diversity solves problems. Diversity never solves problems. Diversity raises a different set of problems. If you are committed to the diversity, you set up means by which to address the problems that diversity brings. The cost of diversity within a student body is to have the institution reflect the appropriate curricula and faculty and administrators. I think that a serious attempt to deal with the issue of race in a comprehensive way—with regard to curriculum, faculty formation and administrative support—did not emerge until the late 1970's. Prior to that, there had been a program by which African-American faculty in other institutions were invited to offer a general-registration course each semester. Scholars like Professors Charles Long, James Cone, Robert Bennett, Gayraud Wilmore, Preston Williams and, I think Albert Raboteau, gave courses that proved to be popular to the entire student body. For some reason, the program was abandoned in the 1980's, although the practice of inviting black homiletics to offer courses was retained. The abandoning of one practice and the retention of the other suggests some assumption about the task of preparing men and women to minister in African-American congregations.

In those days there was a particularly assertive and politically astute group of African-American students on campus. Since what was happening at Princeton was happening at seminaries all over the country, there was enough experience, both at this institution and at other institutions, for some fairly well thought-out positions to be taken regarding the preparation of leaders for racially diverse communities of faith. People weren't talking off the top of their heads. This group of students was quite skilled at forming coalitions with other students. Remember that we're talking about the 1970s. There was a very different student body here—a student body that would eagerly meet the Association of Black Seminarians in the middle ground to form a political coalition. The faculty was presented with a proposal for a black studies program. Interestingly enough, the faculty never voted on that proposal. It did something a whole lot smarter: it bounced the proposal to a subcommittee of its own, which revised the proposal. It came back with only a few things changed. The faculty knew that the trustees were on the record as not wanting to create a chair of black studies or a black studies program. So that was stricken. Nor did the trustees want a dean, as it were, of black students.

All the curricular concerns, which the original document spelled out were, nevertheless, included in the faculty document—except for the requirement that all students take a course in black history. In those days, it was called “blackinizing” the curriculum. A lot of that is impossible to impose upon a professor. You have to trust good will.

There was not a call for a special administrative appointment. The faculty had been informed that the trustees would not consider that. The provision related to administrative support was that a senior level administrator would have, as part of his/her portfolio, those responsibilities to the black community for which the students called in their document. Critical to the document was that a distinguished black scholar (when the president read that part of the report one of our senior faculty people, now retired, giggled and said “Isn't that a contradiction in terms?”), in any of the traditional fields, be invited to join the faculty at the highest possible rank.

I think that the record shows that the faculty document was passed overwhelmingly and forwarded to the Trustees, who were reported to have concurred with equal enthusiasm.

When President Gillespie came, the things that had required good will were in the works, I don't know whether because of a change of faculty or something else. Two things were left hanging, however—things that required explicit action on the part of faculty and trustees and administration: the administrative bit and the distinguished black scholar. These had been hanging for a number of years. Every time one of us would say “Hey!” we would hear back, “We don't have the money.” And since the finances of the seminary were not open for discussion, it was difficult to argue. One of the first things President Gillespie did was create a faculty committee to identify a scholar, to send his/her name to the faculty, and the faculty to the Trustees. I raised the question about the money, to which his response was, “You find the person; I'll find the money.” I appreciated that kind of forthrightness. Within the year, I was able to do that, and Dr. Peter Paris came to the seminary as the Elmer Homrighausen Professor of Social Ethics. With regard to the administrator, Rev. Michael Livingston, an African-American graduate of the seminary, came about that time as the Director of Admissions. He denies that the kinds of responsibilities related to the African-American community that might have been part of his portfolio were ever mentioned to him. I don't know if they have been to any of the most recently appointed African-

American administrators.

I was the first African-American Ph.D. candidate, then I became the first African-American faculty person (mainly because I just don't like to pack!). I was here by myself for a while, and then Dr. Edler Hawkins joined the faculty as a professor of Homiletics (He was also designated Director of Black Studies, but since there was no such program it was a vacuous title). When he died suddenly, I was here by myself again. Then Professor Paris joined the faculty.

Since then, three African-Americans have joined the faculty. Interestingly, they're all "ours"; they all got their degrees here. Professor Brian Blount was an M.Div. student here. Professor Cleo LaRue did both his M.Div. and Ph.D. work here. I did my Ph.D. here. Dr. Paris is the only one who is "untainted," as it were. Outside of, maybe, Union in NY, Virginia Union in Richmond, VA and ITC in Atlanta, we might have the largest number of senior tenured black faculty in any of the ATS schools.

But, we don't have a woman of color, and that is a real problem for me. Unless there is a specific endowment which has expanded the faculty, the way we have gone about faculty formation is this: when a professor dies or retires, we get somebody to replace them. In order to get a particular kind of person you might want to improve the diversity of scholarly perspectives as well as the social diversity of the faculty in general, you've got to have a couple of things coming together: you've got to have somebody die or retire at a time when there is somebody out there who can do what we need to have done at a high rank, so that we can call them to do it. That's gambling. I just think that there are times in the life of an institution, such as that when we invited Professor Paris. There was no place for him in the table of organization. He became supernumerary, but it was important that we have someone of his sort—a distinguished scholar who was black—and an extraordinary search was mounted. And I think that every once in a while you have to look at who you are, and what you are, and what you want to stand for, and what you need in order to be what you want to be, and say "OK, I'm just going to have to do something that doesn't come naturally. I'm going to have to do something extraordinary." It has been difficult to get much institutional energy behind an extraordinary search for a faculty woman of color.

There was a time when we did have a woman of color. Her coming was almost single-handedly a matter of President Gillespie's unilateral use of some preroga-

tives of the president. He thought we needed an African-American woman faculty member. So he went out, found one and presented her to the faculty for its approval. She came as an assistant professor because the president put his influence on the line, and nobody at that time was ready to "front" the president. Unfortunately, her tenure review came at a time when the Board of Trustees was not accepting recommendations for tenure.

In your opinion, does the M. Div. curriculum adequately address issues related to race?

If you look at what's offered now, and the course offerings and the syllabi in courses that were offered twenty to twenty-five years ago, I think you must say that, to a good degree, there has been good will. There's still not nearly as much as there should be. Students can still graduate without knowing nearly what they ought about the nature of the American church as a reflection of a society that has been formed in good measure by racial issues.

There are two historical factors that have been particular to the creation of the American nation. One is the westward explosion of the frontier and the decimation of the Native-American population that was a consequence. The other is the practice of chattel slavery that created an economically viable South and directly and indirectly sustained and influenced the nature of the North. It's fascinating, isn't it, that these essentially racial issues are responsible for what those European footholds on the East coast grew to become (I'm not sufficiently familiar with the depredations of Spanish colonialism to care to speak of the West coast).

From time to time a student protests, "Don't blame me, I never had any slaves!" That may be, but he/she profits very much from the society that slaveholding created—emotionally, psychologically, politically, educationally. Every part of American society (it's almost like Calvin's doctrine of total depravity) is shot through with what chattel slavery created. That's the case whether the student's ancestors arrived on the Mayflower or were part of the waves of European (and more recently Asian and Hispanophone) immigrants who have come to profit from the privileges and amenities that are considered normative for "Americans."

Part of what you have to understand is that we're dealing with a different generation of faculty. The generation addressed by that original document of which we spoke was nearing its retirement age. These were people who had been prepared to teach their subjects in

the 1930s and 1940s. Their exposure to the material that black students were demanding, their sympathy to it, and their ability to teach it were radically truncated. Some had a personal interest in it, like Lefferts Loetscher, Edward Dowey, Samuel Blizzard or Charles West. But apart from people like that, well, we were dealing with the faculty of an American institution of that era. It reflected what was then the prevailing American attitude, which is to say, we shovel uncomfortable things under the carpet; they become non-things, invisible things.

As that faculty began to retire, we acquired a younger group of people. They went to college during or after the civil rights movement. They grew up in a world in which you could not ignore racial issues in this country. You would sit down to dinner and watch the Civil Rights Movement unfold. I don't know how much of what we see with regard to the "revision" of the curriculum, however far that goes, is a function of an increased sensitivity and awareness on the part of a faculty about what is involved in the preparation of people for the ministry in this society, and how much of it is a part of there being a different faculty, with different sensitivities—not necessarily a growing sensitivity—but different sensitivities.

One of things that's problematic is that the experience of the white community—in trying to make sense of the faith, in being the church—is offered as normative for minorities as well as the dominant in society. The marginalizing and minimizing of non-European experience is insulting and open to ridicule in a nation in which the centers of energy—apart from the megachurch aberration—are inordinately in congregations of colored people.

Do you think that the faculty here, as a whole, is comfortable with honestly addressing issues of race?

Probably not entirely so. As I said, this is an American institution, and our faculty, for the most part, is American. American whites are in a really rough situation when they want to deal with issues of race. In order to deal fairly and honestly with the issue of race in our society, they have to be willing to indict their great, great-grandmothers and great, great-grandfathers for some of the most horrific behavior that Western civilization has ever seen. White Americans cannot talk about the roots of this society without saying some very, very uncomfortable things about their parents. It's like playing the "dozens" with yourself. My suspicion is that Americans are much more willing to talk about the Holocaust than the Middle Passage. I'm not dimin-

ishing the horror of the Holocaust. But, given an opportunity to talk about the evil over there of those people or the evil of which *we* are the beneficiaries, it's easier to talk about *their* evil—psychologically it's a whole lot more comfortable. You've really got to say "I am profiting from the evil my parents have done; I am implicit and I am complicit in that." So no, I don't think that most of my colleagues would be entirely comfortable. That's changed somewhat, but they are Americans.

When I was in Divinity School, my roommate my middler year was an ex-marine drill instructor. One day I was, well, not really eavesdropping, but just around a corner, and I heard him talking to another guy. It was obvious he was describing me, but he described me in the weirdest ways: the kind of coat I wore, the classes I was taking, the groups of people I hung out with—he said everything about me except the one thing that would have identified me in that student body. He didn't say, "the colored guy," or "the black guy," or "the Negro." He danced all around that! One day when he and I were driving and I had a captive audience, I confronted him about the conversation and asked him why he had done what he did. He thought about it and started to cry (which is really something for a marine drill instructor!). He said something like, "The fact of the matter is, that I respect you too much to identify you as a Negro." This was a relatively enlightened guy. He had chosen me as a roommate. His kind of attitude is vestigial. I don't think it's ever going to go away. That's just what we're stuck with, and we have to learn to make the best of it. Making the best of it is what we have to pay in order to have the kind of society either in the seminary or at large that many of us want to have. We have to be willing to pay attention to the uncomfortable things that make us who we are.

In the main, as I have said, Princeton Seminary is an American institution; we ought to expect neither more nor less of it than we expect of society in general. It would be naïve to do so.

[On components of the issue of race]

Let's talk about the issue of race, of which racism is a component, and of which naïveté is another component. I think much is a function of the way our society is structured, in which we have, as Hacker says, two nations. Various groups of people have different degrees of ignorance about one another. With regard to racial ignorance, naïveté is a component and maliciousness, or racism, is another component. The rough thing is that malicious racism and naïveté are functional

equivalents. The same things happen because people are naïve or because they are malicious. In fact, if I have to deal with two people, one a racist, and the other a naïf, I'd just as soon deal with the racist. I know where he or she is coming from. I know where he or she stands; I've got some idea how to approach them. The racist will say, "Oh yeah! I did that." As soon as you tell a naïf, "See what you did?" the first thing they will say is "I'm not a racist." Well, I never said you were! I said you're naive. Naive people get so busy defending themselves against the charge of being racist that it's difficult to get them to see what they did. I'd rather deal with someone who is upfront about who they are. Then he/she and I can join the issue. It's the person who gets so busy and so flustered because you address an identity that they don't want to own that freaks me out.

[On the nuisances of being black]

White folks don't seem to realize is how much energy it takes to be black. There is an extra dimension of vigilance that is required in order to negotiate life with any kind of dignity. You're continually having to ask yourself questions that the white community does not have to ask itself. As Cornel West says, race matters. But so does gendered sex, so does class, so does money. Where I went to high school, we generally all took chemical analysis courses. First you took qualitative analysis—what's in that solution? Anybody could pass that class. The one that got us was quantitative analysis. We had to figure out *how much* of what is in there was in there—what the percentages were. You had to adjudicate between the variables. And that's rough, but that's the game that we minorities all have to play.

When I came here as Ph.D. candidate in Pastoral Care, I wanted to do a seminar in the theology department during my first semester. I approached the professor who was running the seminar and I told him I wanted to do it. He said, "Well, you know, a good deal of the work is in German." I said, "That's OK. I can deal with that." He said, "OK, as long as you realize that you're going to have to do a lot of spade work." (It was about the second or third week in the course.) I said, "That's OK." and went away. Three days later the professor ran into me on campus, and was abject in his apologies. "I don't know what got into me. My tongue slipped." I was thoroughly confused. Then the thought occurred to me that he'd used the word "spade" in speaking to me. I knew the man. So I did what ethnic people do, or learn to do; I considered the source. I was ready to let him slide.

There was another member of the faculty, who always used to address me as "boy." I told him, "You know, you can't do that." He said, "I call everybody boy." I said, "That's OK. You can call everybody *else* boy, but I can't afford to have people hear you call me boy, and I not react violently." My sister, who I guess was the first black woman to earn a certificate as a high school principal in New York City used to say that her problem going through life was trying to figure out whether the foolishness that got thrown at her was thrown because she was black, or a woman. And sometimes it was one, and sometimes it was the other.

It's this continual vigilance that begins to wear you down. You invest time in educating people who have power, and then they leave, and you've got to start all over again! I find myself saying things to my colleagues that I've said to at least three or four generations of colleagues. You get sick of it after a while.

We are a society in which one population inherits privilege and another inherits constraints. That's not the fault of either. Things really go awry when the population that has inherited privilege gets the cockamamie notion that it made it on its own, and forgets that it has inherited a way of life that is not altogether praise worthy, and which needs revision; and/or when the other group insists on seeing itself as nothing but a victim, without any agency of its own. As one student said in the opening line of the paper she wrote for me, "The most damaging thing about being privileged is that you can forget that you are."

What are some constructive and proactive steps that white seminary students can take?

I taught a course cross-listed in the history department: *The History and Ministry of the Traditional African-American Denominations*. I was surprised that I had four or five non-black students; I even had a Korean student registered. I didn't ask them to stand up and explain why they were taking the course, but over the course of the semester I managed to engage each one of them in conversation, in the food line or something like that. They said, "I figured I needed to know." The Korean student had a fascinating comment. He said something like, "If you look around in the cities, blacks and Koreans live in adjacent neighborhoods. And we need to know one another. I need to know how to talk about black folks to my Korean congregation." Hey! So, one step is to make a judicious choice of course offerings.

It doesn't have to be courses. There are an awful lot of lectureships that go on around here and people give an awful lot of speeches in the evening. When I

was in divinity school I guess 25% of my education was extra-curricular. You never found anybody in their room at night. There was always a lecture at the university. One of the major amenities of this place is the university. Just go over there and sit in! You don't have to take a course—listen to professors Cornel West, Eddie Glaude, Albert Raboteau or Nel Painter for half of the lectures in a course they are teaching and you'll come out with a whole different understanding of the world. Our black students do. I daresay a larger percentage of our black students take courses over there as M. Div. students than any other population that we have here.

And those are the safe things to do. The risky thing to do, because you're standing out there pretty much naked and open to questions about motivation, is called friendship. It's swimming against the stream, because there's no evidence that being a Christian makes you any more willing or able to get along with people other than your own kind than anyone else.

There are two kinds of bonding. There's "*bonding* bonding," where people who are of the same sort bond. And then there's what's called "*bridging* bonding" where the bond creates a bridge. Have you ever heard of *Bowling Alone*?¹ The author who wrote that book wrote a much better book in which he talks about bonding. "Bonding bonds" (and that's not the phrase he uses) are easy to establish and are relatively long lasting. Historically, PTS has been very affective in fostering these. Bridging bonds are harder to establish; they take continual cultivation. It's hard work, and most people haven't got the energy or the interest. White folks can get along very well without bridging with anyone else; it becomes a matter of having an, "I'm going to do this, damn it!" kind of intentionality. All of the white friends I have are people who made friends with me. I am too self-protective to put myself out in the middle of a space which I know from accumulated generations of experience is one in which I'm extremely vulnerable. I number some of my colleagues here among my closest friends: Jim Armstrong, Randy Nichols...maybe I shouldn't start counting! Each one of us has invested prodigious amounts of emotional energy in the relationship.

I know that this can be very hard to do. How do you talk to a black student, when blacks, as the title of the book says, "all sit together in the cafeteria?" It means finding ways to put yourself out there, and once you get out there, it means finding ways to indicate that you are not using this person as an encyclopedia on black life. Not unless you're ready to pay them

tuition. It's a matter of choosing who you sit next to in various courses. It's a matter of scoping out the scene, and then figuring out who you sit next to. It's a matter of who you walk from Stuart Hall to the cafeteria with; in the food line saying, "If you're not sitting with anybody, can we sit together?" It's a matter of putting yourself out in the middle of a space that is not easy for people in either community. Your friends may well come to you and say, "What are you doing having lunch with all those colored folk (or white folk)?" Your reputation is at stake. It takes nothing less than the investment of an individual determination, and a lot of imagination. You will be swimming against the societal stream.

In order for our diversity to mean anything, we have to intentionally create venues that stack the deck for the kind of enrichment that our various constituencies can be to one another. Otherwise you have a lot of different kinds of people, but the institution, the individual experience, and the educational experience of those people does not profit. The idea that if you get a whole bunch of different kinds of people together, in one geographical context, they're going to cross-fertilize one another automatically does not hold water. There are no birds and bees in the seminary cross-pollinating things. Even people who raise crops in various parts of the country go out and *rent* bees to pollinate their crops, realizing that nature can't be trusted to do it alone. You're going to have to scheme. There is a biblical injunction to scheme. Unless you're ready to scheme, diversity is no more than just an accumulation of different kinds of people and merely serves to camouflage the persistence of the racial status quo.

The words of the Korean student in my Black Denominations course keep coming back to me. The jet-driven demographic changes in our nation's population have the potential to exacerbate racial issues in ways that beggar the imagination. For the sake of us all, those who serve the church need to learn a vocabulary, a syntax and a grammar with which to talk about each other. By the Grace of God, PTS is probably as good a place to learn those as any – on a good day a better place than most. We are the ones who get to decide how fully we are ready to respond to that Grace.



Notes

¹ Robert Putnam, *Making Democracies Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993.

Finale: Personal Reflections

Compartmentalization, Assimilation, Fragmentation:

Seasons of Faith and Identity Development
by *Mihee Kim-Kort*

Growing up in the church, specifically in a Korean Presbyterian community, I found myself trying to keep two worlds separate from each other. I learned the art of compartmentalization. On the weekends, I was a Korean involved in church activities and actively engaged in my faith and in the community. I have early memories of going to church before dawn, asleep in the pew on my mom's shoulder. I would snore soundly as the voices of a small group of devoted Korean immigrants, including my parents, raised in earnest song and supplication to a God they believed would be responsive to their marginalized existence. Yet during the week, when at school or other activities, I simply tried to be a human being doing my best to interact with other human beings. This compartmentalization became more pronounced at a number of levels: racial, cultural, spiritual and psychological. I did not understand what it meant to be myself as a Korean-American Christian, a legitimate follower of Christ. I did not understand what it meant to translate my faith genuinely into daily life, engaging the surrounding culture. Often I would find myself feeling ashamed of the Korean side of my faith. I was especially ashamed of my Korean faith's language and community. It seemed like being a Korean-American Christian was somehow qualitatively different from, even inferior to, being an un-hyphenated American Christian.

As I became increasingly aware of myself as Korean, I realized I was not going to be totally accepted by the majority culture. Even though I spoke perfect English, even though I was devoted to Johnny Depp and the Simpsons and loved pizza, hot dogs and skateboards, I was perpetually seen as foreign and exotic, or, just as destructively, the silent, but model minority. Even though I professed the same faith as many of my peers, I remained unfamiliar and not fully knowable to them because of my slanted brown eyes and dark hair, my essential diet of rice and *kimchee*, and my conversing in a hybrid of Korean and English with my parents.

But I learned the art of assimilation. I suppressed this uncomfortable self-awareness and made huge efforts to persuade others around me (as well as myself) that I was the same as the surrounding domi-

nant culture. For a while, I even went as far as to say that I was just "American" (in my brain this translated as white), echoing the sentiments of my friends who saw me and did not see me as Korean-American, but simply the same as them. I grew up participating in high school fellowship groups like Young Life and FCA, and in college, I continued in Young Life, joined Navigators, attended Campus Crusade for Christ, and the local Presbyterian Church college group. After much work convincing these mostly white communities that I was one of them by taking on their identity, these communities did much to encourage and solidify my faith experience to a certain degree. But for a while now, I have meditated on the disturbing possibility that my faith may be simply the result of an adopted, white Protestant evangelical Christianity. My faith may be an attempt to assimilate and be fully received as a whole human being. Was my faith only a trophy, a badge of some sort held up high for the judging eyes of white Christianity? I am agonized by the question of whether or not I have simply appropriated, manipulated and used Christianity, its theology and language to find acceptance in the dominant, majority, white culture.

So I have moved away from assimilation. These days I am learning the art of fragmentation. This is a positive and negative process: a continuous recognition of the numerous sources of my identity, deconstruction of these influences, and then, most importantly, a work of reconstruction. While it is an interpretive work, recognizing the complicated layers of meaning in relationships and identity development, there is a creative component to the process. It is a process that calls for voice, song, radical writing and thinking. I am embracing this process, undergirded by a theological framework that brings Scripture, traditional historic Christian influences, and other oppressed or silenced groups in conversation with other disciplines, and in the context of the specific social history of Asian-Americans in this country. As I reflect on my faith journey, I realize there are a number of painful pieces that make up who I am – pieces that I have chosen for myself, but pieces that others have forced on me, whether according to assumptions and stereotypes or predictable categories about race, culture, gender, or generation. I am learning how to feel this fragmentation by embracing the disjointedness as my own unique experience while at the same time recognizing the necessity for engagement and inquiry. I am slowly learning how I have navigated

and continue to live through this fragmented existence. Although the Christianity in which I grew up remains legitimate in my mind – this white, evangelical Christianity – and even though my faith language was mostly born out of this community, this process is the preliminary work for a life long project. This life-long project is one in which I am in search of a word, a new Word, that articulates the promise of God’s whole healing and redemption in me as an individual and in society as a whole.

For as long as I can remember, I have avoided the race dynamic. I was taught not to “rock the boat,” to be quiet, to validate and prove myself through material success, to appropriate the language of the dominant Christian culture, and most of all, to get along with everyone, white or black or brown. But, I am realizing that this is a phenomenon that impacts everything from toys and films to employment, church growth, and international relations. The recent revelation for me is that race is not just black and white. While I am affected by this system of viewing and expressing race, I do not easily fit into this system. I am somewhere on the fringes and margins, somewhere in between here and there. I occupy a space that is nebulous and vague. I am in a space where there has been and continues to be a collision of worlds, perspectives, languages. This collision tempts me to compartmentalize and assimilate, but mostly, this collision has the potential to compel me to learn how to appropriate the broken fragments in my understanding of who I am in God and of God’s calling to me. I am learning to re-articulate what it means to live-out my identity in Christ, to realize that I am a unique expression of Christ’s love. Through these seasons of faith and identity I am rediscovering God, God’s salvation, God’s redemption of humanity.



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The Changing Face of Ministry *by Mark Elsdon*

In just a few short weeks I will be graduating from Princeton Theological Seminary. During my time here, I have studied biblical languages and learned how to think theologically. My preaching and pastoral care skills have improved through the insight of excellent professors. I have listened to guest lectures, attended forums and absorbed the collective wisdom of the

many thoughtful scholars connected with this place. I came to seminary in order to prepare for ministry in the church, and as I reflect back on my years here I am thankful for all the many things that I have learned.

Despite all this, however, there is one area that I have not adequately addressed while at seminary, a facet of the pastoral ministry that is growing increasingly essential for anyone preparing for ministry in the 21st century. I have learned Greek and Hebrew, Calvin and Barth, Rogers and Friedman, but while gathering this important knowledge I have not become sufficiently familiar with the actual people who make up the 21st century church.

Our country is changing. Our neighborhoods and cities are transforming in a way that the church must recognize and address. I am not speaking of altered family models, politics or economics. Nor I am referring to poverty, the environment or globalization. Indeed, these are all serious issues that the church must respond to thoughtfully, but the change to which I am referring involves the actual makeup of our communities. The very “face” of this country is shifting in a way that few of our predecessors anticipated.

The Bureau of the Census predicts that by 2050 non-white Americans will make up more than half of the population of the United States. Already there are significant portions of the country where no single ethnic group makes up a majority. My infant daughter who is half white and half Asian represents one of the fastest growing populations in the country. This is a change that will dramatically impact the ministry of our generation of pastors, effecting communities from coast to coast. Are we ready as a church for this emerging reality? I fear we are not.

Are we ready to embrace as church members the actual people who live in our communities? We will increasingly discover our neighbors to be those who speak a different language, eat different foods, or even read the Bible from a different perspective. While this is particularly difficult for traditional white churches, it is an issue facing the entire spectrum of ethnic communities. As neighborhoods grow increasingly mixed, schools are filled with different languages and the workplace becomes a rainbow of faces, how will the church respond? I believe the church has an opportunity. We can take the lead in our communities by bringing people together and building bridges between ethnic groups. We have the opportunity to live as communities who authentically embody what it means to be reconciled to God in Jesus Christ and to be reconciled to one another.

This is the very opportunity that I have not fully explored in my time at Princeton Seminary. I believe that the Kingdom of God is multi-ethnic and that Christ calls the church to be a vessel for reconciliation. Despite this reality, our seminary, which is the training ground for the next generation of pastors, remains fragmented and divided by race. Indeed, there are people from many ethnic groups and countries on our campus. But the fact of our diversity by no means ensures that real bridges will be built. For a start, I would like to see the seminary make a more intentional effort to engage students in cross-cultural education. Are we really prepared to minister in a multi-ethnic world after reading only white theologians and being taught by predominately white faculty?

At the same time, I must confess that my own lack of action contributes a great deal to this missed opportunity. I am surrounded every day by students and faculty who come from widely different backgrounds, yet I have not really engaged with them on a personal level. This sort of direct, personal engagement cannot result from detached academic curiosity, but must come through the mutual sharing of lives in community. I have sat in endless precepts spending more time dwelling on what sort of “profound” statement I can make to impress the preceptor instead of listening, really listening to my colleagues. This missed opportunity saddens me. If we cannot build bridges at seminary when we are all together in the same room, I worry about the future of our ministries.

Yet God is a God of grace and second chances. The opportunity remains. Each day in the seminary cafeteria there is a chance to sit with someone different. In every precept there is an opportunity to listen carefully to our classmates. There are a handful of classes that introduce students to non-white theological perspectives. Most of all there are real people, people from all kinds of backgrounds with whom we are called to share our lives while at seminary, in the church and in our communities. As the face of our country grows more diverse, the opportunity to live as God’s reconciling community presents itself again and again.



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The Relevance of Race

by Danté R. Quick

Reinhold Niebuhr was correct in his belief that “man has always been his most vexing problem.”¹ Racism, as a misuse of power, is a manifestation of humanity’s anxiety and at the heart of the problem. When one examines human relations in the United States in general and Princeton Theological Seminary more specifically, race must be explored.² In his examination of the human condition, Niebuhr classified race as just one of the elements that provided for natural cohesion or differentiation in society. As such, the extent to which one does or does not engage in a dialogue about race meters out how relevant one is as a conversation partner regarding societal arrangements.

In other words, in a nation where race has been one of the most critical dynamics in determining human and national harmony, race must be an ongoing topic of conversation. One need only read the March 18th addition of the Chicago Sun-Times which reported that “for as long as there has been an America, whites have made up a clear majority. But that will change by 2050 when minority groups will be 49.9 percent of the population, the Census Bureau says.”³ A church, seminary or publication that is out of touch with this reality is not, and will not, be relevant.

It is with this in mind that I become ambivalent when asked to participate in a special issue on race. The fact that the term “special feature” or “race issue” is used leads me to believe that outside of that issue the topic of race is not regularly integrated in the ethos and content of the publication. In effect, I am led to question whether the publication is credible and/or relevant.

This is not a new or unique question. As African-Americans, the question of racial relevance has been ever present. Just ask Carter G. Woodson who in 1912 earned a Ph.D. from Harvard University in History. Dr. Woodson recognized that American mainstream scholarship of his time did not reflect the history of his people and was therefore flawed and inadequate. After concluding that the scholarship of the day was not relevant, Dr. Woodson started the Journal of Negro History in 1916, and in 1926, developed Negro History Week. It is Negro History Week that has evolved into what is now recognized as Black History Month.

As African-Americans, whose ontology has been subjugated by decades of Christian sanctioned ideology and theology, we do not have the luxury of not making race central to our daily thought. In fact, many of my

colleagues refuse to engage this publication because of its past affiliations with The Charles Hodge Society. Though Dr. Hodge made lasting and credible contributions to the world of theological thought, “the late theologian’s participation in and perpetuation of the institution of slavery”⁴ offers a person of color pause when his name is invoked with such great esteem and admiration.

Slavery and racism are indeed counter to the message of love and community that is central to the Gospel. Hence, the relevance of race cannot be questioned given this country’s history. In that regard, as a student and President of the Association of Black Seminarians, I applaud the current editorial staff of this publication for taking the first step in becoming relevant to the life of a diverse racial and ethnic student body.

The Relevance of Race and Princeton Theological Seminary

In reflecting on race at Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS), I begin my inquiry thinking of one of the most renowned theological figures on the PTS campus, Karl Barth. His impassioned cry, “God with us,” rings throughout the campus. With this statement Barth reports:

At its heart the Christian message is a common statement on the part of certain men, i.e., those who are assembled in the Christian community. It includes a statement about themselves, about the individual existence of these men in their own time and situation. And it is essential to it that this should be so.⁵

Clearly, Barth presents a God who is with us in our existential reality. He introduces a God who is connected to the communal and individual circumstances of “*their time and situation*.” What does it mean to say that they will express a “*common statement*?” A “*common statement*” is one that embraces the thoughts and concerns of all in the community. It does not disregard the merits of David Walker (1785-1830) and his appeal, or make insignificant the concerns of the oppressed. It does not suggest the poor are such out of laziness and that people of color are at Princeton because of affirmative action.

As one of the Presbyterian church’s flagship educational institutions, PTS nestles the reformed tradition firmly in her warm breast as her young students suckle

its nourishments and prepare for the ministry. Yet, I am sometimes forced to wonder as I walk this campus, who is “*us*?” As an African-American student, I occasionally wonder if I have been fully grafted into this fine and prestigious institution. I am brought to this question by the tension I encounter in precepts when issues of race are mentioned, or by the fact that many of my white colleagues will pass me on campus and not speak. “God with *us*?” These concerns are not mine alone. The existence of the Association of Black Seminarians stands as a testimony to the sometimes oppressive realities of being of African descent on this campus. “God with *us*?” Does not this God desire to be with us and have us in community with each other?

In a sermon delivered in the National Cathedral in Washington D.C. on March 31, 1968 entitled “*Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution*,” Dr. Martin Luther King suggested that “we must face the sad fact that at eleven o’clock on Sunday morning when we stand to sing ‘In Christ there is no East or West,’ we stand in the most segregated hour of America.”⁶ It is clear that Dr. King has not been in the Mackay Campus Center during the lunch or dinner hours. There he would find tables that are for the most part divided along racial and ethnic lines. What can be said about the lack of African-American Women on the faculty of one of the finest seminaries in the world in the year 2004?

In a similar vein as Barth, PTS President, Dr. Thomas Gillespie, outlines a vision for theological education that is geared towards the difficult negotiation of the harsh realities of life and human finitude by embracing a God that is with us. In explicating the construct of *theologia*, Dr. Gillespie suggests:

Beyond the magnitude of the material before us, there is the painful fact that *theologia* does not yield to theological understanding without addressing critical issues that are not extraneous to our Christian fiduciary framework, issues that are difficult to resolve and often tempt us to doubt the wisdom of faith that brought us to this place.⁷

This call is a call to be relevant. This is a call to embrace and challenge those realities that lead us away from one another and do not allow us to honor the call of Martin Luther who states, “now when you have Christ as the foundation and chief blessing of your salvation, then the other part follows: that you take him as

your example, giving yourself in service to your neighbor just as you see that Christ has given himself for you.”⁸

PTS has responded to the charge of Dr. Gillespie to be an institution reaching for relevance. With each passing year, the presence of minority students in both M. Div. and Ph.D. programs continues to grow. Their presence enriches the environment by offering new ways of interpreting the Gospel. Through their education here, communities across the nation will inherit the fruit of the rich resources. Their variations of denominational affiliation allow for a rich ecumenical dialogue to mature and prosper outside of these walls, thus, sowing the seeds of denominational and racial community cooperation.

As an African-American, the impact of Professors Hanson, Paris, LaRue and Blount have been immeasurable. Their scholarship has allowed me and countless other students to not only access the broader world of scholarship, but to explore the intricacies of specific contexts through their exhaustive knowledge base. They along with Professors Rivera-Pagan and Sang Hyun Lee⁹ provide invaluable insight into accessing and dialoguing with cultures and theology that may not be readily available.

Reaching for Relevance

As one of the premier centers for theological education in the world, the question ever before PTS, as I see it, is how can we continue to train students to respond to the call of Christ with the theological tools and cutting-edge insights needed to champion the Gospel in a diverse world? In short, how can PTS be relevant and produce leaders in the community and the academy that are committed to the needs of all of God’s people? As I close, I would like to posit just two suggestions for reaching that goal.

First, embrace diversity. By this I am suggesting that the German Theologian, Jürgen Moltmann was correct in stating:

To create community does not merely mean uniting what is different. It differentiates the One as well. The unfolding differentiation of the potentialities given and opened up through a common reality in no way contradicts this movement towards community, for differentiation is one of the essential elements in community. It is only standardization which reduces community to the lowest common denomina-

tor. True community is different. It opens up individual potentialities in the greatest given diversity.¹⁰

Moltmann is challenging the church and related institutions to open themselves to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit in a way that does not necessitate the elimination of unique identity by anyone. Would the home of reformed theology be brought down by a Womanist (i.e. African-American woman) scholar, or, perhaps enriched? Who is engaging in rich theological reflection about the state of African-American women? The Centers for Disease Control reports that 1 in every 160 black women ages 25-44 are HIV-infected. “God with us?” This community of women is 23 times more likely than white women to have AIDS. “God with us?” Amnesty International reports, “over a five year period, the incarceration rate of African American women increased by 828%.”¹¹ “God with us?” Are we relevant for this population? Is the next generation of Ivy League ministers armed with the knowledge or concern to minister to this segment of God’s community?

We as a community cannot afford to shun those who do not fit the mold of theological reflection that is native to our racially homogenous practices. In order to be relevant, the faculty must begin to reflect the communities in which we hope to minister. Moltmann offers us a theological framework for such a movement. If we as a community continue to serve and worship the triune God as revealed through Jesus Christ, then out of that common reality, we can in our diversity lift God’s church and God’s people. There is potential and strength in diversity. Is this not what is at the heart of the Nicene marks of the church, “one holy catholic and apostolic church.” “God with us?” We must embrace diversity in a meaningful and power-sharing way!

Secondly, we must be radical in our pursuit of God’s truth. Those who become content with the status quo are sure to lose their radical sensibilities. This means we must be in constant critical re-examination of ourselves. Is this not what we find in such radical theologians as Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer? Is not the Barth of the later *Church Dogmatics* one who critiqued and grew from the young “red” Barth of Safenwil? Of course, one just needs to explore Bonhoeffer’s brilliant book *Letters & Papers From Prison* and his concept of “Religionless Christianity” to see one who is grappling with the established norms of the faith as to be relevant for a world coming of age.

So we too must engage in critical reflection to determine if we as an institution are serving a broad and diverse community. Are men and women of color in positions that effect policy and curriculum? I suggest we take Paulo Freire seriously as he posits:

Those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly. This conversion is so radical as not to allow for ambiguous behavior. To affirm this commitment but to consider oneself the proprietor of revolutionary wisdom—which must be given to (or imposed on) the people—is to retain the old ways. The man or woman who proclaims devotion to the cause of liberation yet is unable to enter into *communion* with the people, whom he or she continues to regard as totally ignorant, is grievously self-deceived.¹²

Are we as an institution attempting to be radical in our ethic of love and our commitment to serve the church as a whole? Let us walk in faith and solidarity. It is not enough to bring people to Christ and not to each other.

In conclusion, it is not enough to critique and yet be uninvolved in the process of construction. My call to all who read this essay is to move out from our positions of comfort and engage each other on those issues of race which have thus far gone unspoken. Let us examine ourselves and our commitment to follow Christ in a real and meaningful way. My challenge to the entire community as it relates to race and fellowship is that we adopt the relational constructs of the Rev. Dr. Howard Washington Thurman. Thurman in his understanding of the love of God offers a vision for how love can be transformative on a vertical (humanity to God) as well as a horizontal (humanity to each other) plane when he writes:

The only thing I do know is that something happens to you when you become aware of another's love that releases you, that frees you. You relax even your need of privacy. You share the quality of your concern and your aspirations, your doubts, your limitations, with quiet confidence that whatever defects you reveal, the loved one will help you remove them from your life. The fault which you have covered up, lest its exposure give to another what could become, in his hands, an instrument

of violence now becomes one of the creative means by which the quality and the integrity and the character of your life are improved and enriched.¹³

In this regard, I applaud my fellow student leaders who worked to structure and execute the workshop on race that was held for the Junior class in the fall of 2003. I pray that more will join us in building bridges of love across the racial fractures of our community. May the love and peace of our Lord and Savior be with us all!



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Notes

¹ Reinhold Niebuhr. *The Nature and Destiny of Man, Volume I: Human Nature* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 1.

² I agree with Oliver Cox and his book, *Caste, Class, and Race*, that race is a manifestation of the capitalist impulse. Yet, in this essay, I will deal only with the construct of race as it is popularly dealt with in the public sphere.

³ Genaro C. Armas, "U.S. Population to Increase Almost 50% by 2050 Census Says," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 18 March 2004 [on-line]; available from <http://www.suntimes.com/output/census/cst-wws-pop18.html>; Internet.

⁴ Christina M. Busman, ed. "To the PTS community," *The Princeton Theological Review* 10, no. 1 (2003): Insert.

⁵ CD IV/1, 4.

⁶ King Speech.

⁷ Thomas W. Gillespie. "Why a Theological Education?," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, 25, no. 1 (2004): 7.

⁸ Timothy Lull, ed. *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 107.

⁹ This list is intended to note the names of those who have reached the rank of Associate Professor and above.

¹⁰ Jürgen Moltmann. *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 220.

¹¹ Women's Human Rights page. "Women in Prison: A Fact Sheet," *USA Amnesty International*, 18 March 2004 [on-line];

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/women/womeninprison.html>; Internet.

¹² Paulo Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Addition* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 60-61.

¹³ Howard Thurman. *The Growing Edge*. (Indiana: Friends United Press, 1956), 66.

The Third Race by Edward Kim

The following is a call to action based upon my conviction that the truth of the gospel is undermined when a “de facto agent of racial apartheid”¹ graduates another generation of pastors who will perpetuate the legacy of Sunday morning being the most racially segregated hour in America.²

Remnants of Racism at PTS

The remnants of institutional racism can easily be observed at PTS. Every meal hour, there are the majority white seminarians sitting together on one side of the cafeteria and the minority groups sitting on the other side. When small groups gather to pray and keep each other accountable, their members are largely the same race. When race-based clubs organize meetings or host guest lectures, the attendants are of the same race. What is interesting in all this is that there are no official policies or signs that say, “Whites Only” or “Koreans Only.” The above phenomena appear to be voluntary.

Missional Reasons for Integration

For the church to be a faithful witnessing community of God’s in-breaking kingdom, it must take into account a group’s culture. Revelation 7:9 makes this clear. There are, however, at least three contrasting assumptions that bear on how this should be done. The multiculturalist Christian assumes the gospel must be translated in the ethnic group’s language because ethnicity is inherently valuable. The monoculturalist Christian assumes the ethnic group must be taught the missionary’s language because the missionary’s culture is equivalent with Christian civilization. The transculturalist Christian assumes the gospel must be translated only to make it understandable without regard to the value of the group’s ethnicity. Thus the multiculturalist interprets Revelation 7:9 as holding the promise of the preservation of racial ethnicities, whereas the transculturalist interprets the verse as holding the promise of the universal appeal of the gospel.

To appreciate which of these views is more congruent to the church’s mission, it is worth contrasting socio-historical assumptions of the early church with our own modern views of race.³ Since Romanticism, race has been defined as natural, heritable, and immutable, and by the late 19th century was further objectified by biological science. In the early church context, however, race and ethnicity were perceived as mutable, contingent practices and habits, not as natures or essences (Buell, 462). Taking advantage of this common perception of race, early Christians like Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian advocated for Greeks and Jews to convert to the Third race, that is, Christians.⁴ The assumption of that period, completely opposite of ours, was that one could change races. In this light, it makes more sense to interpret Revelation 7:9 as advocating for the conversion of all races to the Third one (cf. Matt 28:19) rather than for the preservation of ethnic identities as defined by modernism.

This clash of historical worldviews on race is most visible in the ways in which Jewish identity has come to be defined. Philo of Alexandria argued that Jews constituted a unique race in that they were not defined by geographical location but by their common religious practice.⁵ However, in the late 19th and early 20th century, scientific racism reduced the Jewish identity to that of biological composition, making conversion to and from Judaism virtually impossible (Buell, 467). Ernest Renan’s 1863 *Life of Jesus*, which distinguished Jesus “the Aryan Jew” from the Semitic Pharisees, is an extreme yet symbolic example of this modern attempt to biologize race.

In short, the first century paradigm of ethnic mutability “allowed Christians to relativize the significance of ethnic and racial identities of their converts, by arguing that conversion entailed the transformation of one’s race . . . leading to the formation of a new people” (Buell, 473). This is not to say that ethnicity was viewed as irrelevant (as in the viewpoint of the transculturalists), for the Third race could only be a significant proclamation at that time if race were taken seriously. But contrary to contemporary views, the early church perceived Christians themselves as being a race and the only race that mattered (Gal 3:28). Therefore, a church or a seminary, operating under modern assumptions of race, cannot be a faithful witnessing community of God’s kingdom simply because it does not have the paradigm to appreciate how radical that kingdom is manifest, taking on and subsuming all earthly identities. As the next point illustrates, the *mis-*

sio Dei can only be realized when diverse peoples are “brought to complete unity” (Jn 17:23. cf Eph 2:15).

Theological Reasons for Integration

Peter was rebuked for “not acting in line with the truth of the gospel” when he separated from fellowship on the basis of race (Gal 2:14). Attempts to differentiate between the problems of racism and legalism in Galatians 2-3 is to make an anachronistic distinction as detailed above. Thus Paul makes his defense of the gospel by reviewing both the doctrine of justification (Gal 3:24) and the doctrine of community (Gal 3:28). For the apostle, the truth of the gospel is at stake in racial integration precisely because the Gospel proclaims the reality of God’s in-breaking kingdom as manifest in the formation of a new race (cf. 1 Pet 2:9-10). Since unity out of diversity (“*e pluribus unum*”) expresses a defining characteristic of this new race (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11), the reverse, “out of one, many,” temporarily followed by Peter in Galatians 2, is condemned by Paul as undermining the gospel’s kingdom pronouncement that “there is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). What is worth highlighting here, especially in our individualistic society, is that the gospel is communicated both through the content of one’s personal beliefs and through the character of one’s faith community.⁶ To assert that the truth of the gospel is at stake in whether a faith community integrates or not is therefore not an exaggeration. One might recall the autobiography of Malcolm X, whose retaliatory racism was only quenched by his encounter with the racially mixed group of Muslims at Mecca, to see that an integrated community has gospel connotations and converting power.

Sociological Reasons for Integration

If one’s predisposition has been informed by values rooted in modern conceptions of race, it is not enough to rely upon people to choose freely for themselves with whom they want to fellowship, for their predispositions are not free from counter-Gospel assumptions about identity. Affirmative action is required.

Incidentally, I did not appreciate how little most white people could relate to the pains of minorities who have suffered from racism until I heard the complaints of my white friends who became a minority for the first time in their lives while living in Korea for a year. They expressed frustration over petty jokes,

uncomfortable looks, race-based questions, and a general sense of not belonging to society. It was only then that I became more aware of the majority group’s inability to empathize based on the mere fact of being in the majority.

Given this inability, it is appropriate to emphasize the argument that race-based clubs like race-based denominations (e.g., AME) are a response to white-based racism. This fact cannot be taken for granted today especially because of the peculiar phenomena in which hyphens (e.g., Asian-American) have now been embraced by some minority groups, leading many white people to believe that these forms of identification were in fact initiated by minorities. The concept, “Asian-American”, to be clear, is a western construct. An American of Korean descent has more in common with an American of Liberian descent than he does with a natural-born Filipino. It is also worth stating here to prevent possible misunderstanding that there is nothing wrong with appreciating one’s ethnic heritage. What is wrong is the racial balkanization of God’s kingdom. If non-Asians attended AAPTS-hosted events, then this article would be irrelevant. But racial integration of such events is neither a reality nor is it treated as a priority. Race-based groups are primarily there for respective races, and not for the Third race. They are agents of de facto racial apartheid, and not of the integration of God’s kingdom.

Assuming:

“Numerous studies by Gordon Allport, Thomas F. Pettigrew, and other social psychologists testify that interracial contact - on equal terms - is the best way to overcome prejudice. Overcoming segregation is the crucial step.”⁷ And, “[t]he extent of contact is another vital factor. However intimate, one cross-race friendship is not enough. Involvement in an interracial network, on the other hand, ends the isolation that generates prejudicial stereotypes.”⁸

I suggest:

* That PTS publicly and officially promote and encourage small accountability groups with a racially diverse makeup to eat together in the cafeteria and meet to pray together on a regular basis. Brown Hall’s first floor weekly lunch gathering is a good model that should be actively promoted by each deacon for each

floor of every dorm building.

* Establish an affirmative action-type elective program for white churches who prefer minority pastors and vice versa.

* An integration task force composed of the leaders of all race-based clubs (official and de facto) should be formed to encourage, *inter alia*, the participation of all races in campus events. Otherwise, people will naturally assume that the sponsoring club intends only for their own respective race to attend.

Conclusion:

Only until modern perceptions of race are replaced by assumptions more congruent with New Testament theology (e.g., first century perceptions of racial mutability) can the church be a credible “sign of God’s eschatological reconciliation of the world”⁹ once known as the Third race and characterized by unity in diversity. Otherwise, race-based groups and monoethnic churches will continue to testify of another kingdom, governed by other principles, contrary to what Christ inaugurated through His death and resurrection (Rev 5:9-10).



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Notes

¹ *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-based activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism* (ed. Robert Wuthnow and John Evans; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 201.

² Martin Luther King, Jr., “Paul’s Letter to American Christians,” in *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Birth of a New Age: December 1955 - December 1956*, ed. Clayborne Carson et al (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 3:417.

³ I rely especially on Denise Kimber Buell, “Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition”, *Harvard Theological Review*, 94:4 (2001) 449-476.

⁴ Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, book 1; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* (6.39.4; 41.2; 41.6); Justin Martyr, *First Apology* (14.3).

⁵ Philo of Alexandria, *Legat.* 214-16; *Flaccus* 44-46.

⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 189.

⁷ *The Quiet Hand of God*, 201.

⁸ *Ibid*, 206.

⁹ Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (HarperCollins, 1996), 440.

Pentecaste! The Spirit of Grace Versus the Spirit of Race *by Jacob Cherian*

High school diplomas from some parts of India may also contain a line where (along with the student’s professed religion) the so-called caste of the student is indicated. Once while going through a pile of applications to our Bible College, we stumbled across an applicant whose diploma recorded a hitherto unknown caste. *Pentecaste!* Those of us who read it burst out laughing! We could almost picture it. While filling out forms the young man and/or his parent would have been asked about the applicant’s religion and caste. They probably responded that they were Pentecostal Christians. A new caste was recorded!

On further thought, it dawned on me that this is what God is doing. God loves the world, not worlds! I believe this is what the Spirit wants to engender in God’s Church, and in God’s world. Pentecost for all peoples, for all castes! It’s the creation of *one* multicultural people. *Pentecaste* happens when the Spirit creates space in our hearts for 50 castes! It takes root when we embrace a multitude of ethnic groups and nationalities, and celebrate the common grace that has been given us in the coming of the Spirit. The Spirit baptizes us into *one* Body of Christ! The new covenant establishes *Pentecaste!* *Pentecaste* is celebrated when Peter overcomes his prejudice – even if, reluctantly – and goes to share the good news with, and the company of, the so-called “low-caste” Gentiles (Acts 10-11). But *Pentecaste* is imperiled when Peter moves away from the table of the Gentiles at Antioch when he is threatened by arrival of some from Jerusalem (Gal. 2:11-21). *Pentecaste* is promoted when Philip hurries to proclaim the Messiah to a Samaritan town (Acts 8:5f.). Today *Pentecaste* happens when in the castelands of India, the Brahmin and the Dalit drink deep from the one Cup, and share in each other’s lives. *Pentecaste* emerges when deep in the American Biblebelt, white and black Christians rub shoulders and together stomp over the smoldering ancient fires of racial pain and pessimism. We see it when the

Palestinian Christian embraces the Israeli. We weep for joy when the Indian hugs the Pakistani, and the Iraqi calls the American, "My Sister."

Luke the theologian records that the purpose of Pentecost was to take the gospel *also* to the Samaritans (Acts 1:8). Luke's gospel narrative gives us three fascinating Samaritan stories that have no counterpart in the other Gospels (Yes, Luke is my favorite Gospel!). First, the so-called parable of "the Good Samaritan" (10:30-37) – our title provides a perfect Jewish oxymoron. And how dare Jesus make the hated Samaritan the hero – that too in contrast to a priest and a Levite? Did he not know that the word "Samaritan" itself served as an abuse? He would have known (According to the Fourth Gospel, that was a choice abuse heaped on Jesus [John 8:48]). You are not going to win a popularity contest with Jews by narrating such stories.

Second, you may remember the story of that leper who returns alone to give praise to God (17:11-19). The lesson I learned in Sunday school (that we need to be grateful, not ungrateful like the nine who did not say "Thank you") misses the punch. We are not ready for this. Mr. Grateful is "of another race" – a Samaritan! The three rhetorical questions of Jesus tell you the point Luke wants his readers to get. Presumably the others, who did not return to praise God, were Jews. And does it matter that "Jew" comes from Judah, and that Judah means "praise"?

Probably one of the most revealing Lukan narratives is the one about the aborted bombing mission in Samaria (9:51-57). Good old James and John - I mean the *apostles* James and John - they could not stomach a slight by the Samaritans. How dare these pesky Samaritans refuse to offer us hospitality when we are traveling to Jerusalem! We will show them their place and prove our power! After all we have God and the Scripture on our side! The "sons of thunder" were ready to render justice for the insult meted to their master. I am really impressed and intrigued by their question. "Lord, do *you* want *us* to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" First of all, these two possess unmatched faith. They believe that, on receiving Jesus' go-ahead, they could give the command, Elijah-style, and fire would come and incinerate these mean brutes! That would serve them right for messing with God and God's people! Second of all, they think Jesus also wants to do what they want to. Does not God also think the way we do? Third of all, even if Jesus wanted to bomb the daylights out of these Samaritans, they wanted to have the pleasure of actually pulling the trigger! This reminds me of the reaction

of a passing motorist on seeing a small group silently holding "Peace" placards in downtown Princeton. He angrily shouted: "Bomb them all! God bless America!"

But when *Pentecaste* begins to take a hold of us, then we hear Jesus rebuking us, just as he did the two apostles. What did Jesus say to them? He probably rebuked them with something in line with the additional words which some manuscripts have provided: "You do not know of what spirit you are." These dear apostles, who were doing powerful Kingdom jobs at the beginning of this chapter (9:1-6), were at this point being controlled with the spirit of race. Would they want to call fire on their "own people"? Does not Luke narrate that some people in Nazareth actually tried to kill Jesus (4:28-30)? Why no precision bombing to target the Nazareth synagogue on a bright Sabbath? God be praised! He does not do our bidding! Fortunately in the later Lukan narrative (Acts 8:14-17) we see John and Peter laying hands on some Samaritans to invoke another kind of fire on them – the Spirit's fire! Now you could call that a *spiritual* turnaround.

I have seen how casteism can play a devastating drama in some (even Christian!) contexts in India; have observed first hand how tribalism can control the Christian Yoruba and Ebo person in Nigeria; and have personally seen racism rear its ugly head in Canada and America. But I have hope! I have also experienced *Pentecaste* in all these places! I take comfort in the fact that we have received from Jesus' fullness, grace upon grace (John 1:16). The divine Spirit of grace will overcome the demonic spirit of race. Lord! Shower us with *Pentecaste*!



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Race Reflections and the Glory of God: A Personal Journey by Eun-hyey Park

During my years at Oberlin College, I struggled, unsuccessfully, to fashion a Christ-centered response to racism. The campus raged with anti-racism protests, speak-outs and teach-ins, and I grew to expect and fear the increasing militancy of student activism. As a leader in the self-proclaimed evangelical Christian fellowship (InterVarsity) on campus, I knew that I needed to care, and try to understand. But my perceptions of what it meant to remain faithful to Christ made me

fearful of engaging in deep conversations with those who were so committed to a cause in a manner that seemed to validate rage before compassion.

Things came to a head when the promising crop of rising seniors in our Christian fellowship chose leadership positions in the Asian-American advocacy groups rather than to help lead our bible studies and worship nights. One by one, they left our fellowship, embittered and disheartened by our lack of understanding that they, too, were seeking to honor God by their fight against racism. It was then that I had to ask myself, why was I so resistant to participating in politically active groups? Why was it so hard for me to see that fighting racism was compatible with God's desires? The answer came late at night, almost as a vision. I saw that all my life, I had believed God was white. Thus, I did not think God could understand what I had been through or have the capacity to care about the racism I had faced.

After that revelation, I became more hesitant to accept all that the culture of my fellowship was teaching me. Though our campus fellowship was racially diverse, the parent culture of our fellowship, especially in the Northeast Ohio region, was predominantly white. It colored our priorities, and made us suspicious of all "political" causes as springing from human agendas rather than God's righteousness. The discipleship I received (or perhaps was only willing to receive) emphasized personal spiritual disciplines, such as prayer and quiet time, evangelism and bible study. We knew about racism, but we did not know how to fight against it, while remaining faithful to our fellowship's activities. I became more interested in what my activist peers had to say. In some of them, I could see that their activism sprung from the core of their being. The authenticity of their convictions and the depth of their passion touched me. Others intimidated me because of their rage and hate toward those who had hurt them. I gave in to mimicking the former group's convictions, both because I admired them and feared what people might think about an Asian who was ambivalent about fighting racism. By the time I graduated, I was bitter at the Christians for their cluelessness and resentful of those activists who were intolerant of the non-militant. I felt lost and confused about how to process my pain and growing cynicism in light of my relationship with Jesus.

After graduating, I was granted a kind of reprieve from thinking about race issues while living in Korea. There, my bitterness quieted but never fully disappeared. A year after my return to the States, I

enrolled in Princeton Theological Seminary (PTS), where a talk during an Asian Association (AAPT) event stirred my long-buried frustration. The speaker proclaimed that Christ was revealed in the hidden places. He urged us to name our hurts, pains, and shame in order that Christ could begin to heal them, especially in relation to racism. That night, a floodgate opened. For the first time, I felt free to explore how to acknowledge and resist racism and its impact on me in ways that trusted in Divine and not human efforts.

Throughout my first year, I met many well-intentioned students and faculty who blurted out statements dripping with racial bias. They were entirely unaware that their comments were in the least objectionable. Questions like, "No, where are you really from?" or "How do you do this in Korea?" belied the basic (often subconscious) assumption that I did not belong in this country. Time and again, the fact that I was Korean was singled out in other people's speech toward me, making me increasingly wary that what they saw when they saw me was not me, but my skin. Although I embrace and celebrate my cultural heritage, I do not define myself in primarily cultural or ethnic terms. Culture is simply a part, albeit a treasured part, of whom I am. When my friends call me their "Korean friend," I wince. I would never think to call my friends by their ethnic grouping. How ridiculous would it sound if I came up and greeted my Euro-American friends, "So how is my white friend doing today?"

The following summer, as I worked with other concerned students to plan a racial reconciliation workshop for the PTS community, I realized I was not alone. As I listened to my fellow students articulate their experiences of racially-based discrimination here at PTS, I learned how much needed to change in order to create a productive learning environment for all. White students, who were coming to terms with their racism and their racially privileged status; Latino/Latina students, who were constantly having their student or even immigration status questioned; African-American students, who were asked again and again in classes to represent their entire race; Asian-American students, who were consistently mistaken for international students because of their skin; and the many students of ethnic backgrounds that were not even represented by any student group; all these presented a symphony of needs that did not register on the ears of those with the authority to make meaningful changes. Situation after situation, story after story, made me fear for the future leadership of the church. If the majority of the students and faculty at this flagship

institution for one of the largest mainline denominations in the United States remained clueless about the reality of racism (let alone how to deal with it), how would they bear witness against its dehumanizing effects?

From the previous AAPTS moderator, who had invited me to participate in the planning meetings for the workshop, I learned yet another lesson: Asians needed to articulate their resistance in ways that fit who we were. We could not simply copy our African-American colleagues, although we had much to learn from them. Likewise, we could not adopt the ways in which the white and Latina/Latino students each envisioned and expressed their resistance to racism. I learned that having been raised in an Asian home makes it more difficult for me to challenge those in authority. Also, I saw that as a group, we have had far less experience articulating the specific form of racism that had been perpetrated against us than African Americans have. Consequently, we have almost no role models, especially within the church, who speak out against the sin of the majority's perception of us and our inaction regarding it.

Thus, I became aware that Asian-specific organizations, such as AAPTS, were needed to help cultivate a prophetic voice to challenge racism's corrosive impact on the fullness of the contributions we, as Asian Americans, were intended to bring to the Body of Christ. Without the vision of last year's AAPTS leaders to sponsor speakers who addressed racism and its impact, I would have remained in denial about the extent of the ravages of racism within me and at PTS. However, because they had such foresight, AAPTS became a place that launched and sustained a process of discovery, healing and restoration. I am still very much at the beginning of this process, and I am constantly amazed at the magnitude of God's glory that is revealed as God increasingly affirms that I am made in God's image. I am only starting to glimpse how much God has invested in creating each one of us as encultured individuals in communities.

That said, I have also observed that the cultivation of an awareness of the particular contributions to the Kingdom of God by Asian-Americans and other historically silenced groups would be most effectively sustained through the fostering of both ethnic-specific and multicultural groups. While ethnic-specific groups have the advantage of being able to better minister to the unique hurts and foster the particular gifts of their constituencies, without continued inter-cultural conversation, the strengths and weaknesses of each group will

never be accurately perceived by the ethnic group itself, not to mention those who claim affiliation with other groups. It was out of my conversations with those who planned the racial reconciliation workshop that I began to grasp what I as an Asian-American had to contribute to this seminary, and ultimately the church. As I continued to listen to the particular pain and vision of each community, as expressed through their guest speakers, as well as in cafeteria conversations, I understood better my own community's struggles and gifts. Without such sustained cross-cultural interaction, my perception of God's glory would have been much more limited. It was precisely because each community's understanding and experience of God was different from my own that their view of God expanded mine. Had I remained entirely within my own cultural framework in worship, study and relationships, I would have deprived myself of the joy of knowing the aspects of God that God had entrusted to those who are different from me.

Hearing other people's stories has helped me begin to articulate my own. My hope is that this story would do the same, in order that the testimony of all God's people would be allowed to witness to the full extent of God's glory.



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Emerging from Invisibility: A Reflection on Latinas/os and the Church *by Eric Barreto*

In his classic masterpiece, *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison artistically outlines the life of a man hidden to those around him. However, Ellison quickly clarifies to the first-time reader that his composition has nothing in common with a science-fiction tale of a man with a translucent epidermis; there is not some physical variance which causes this nameless man to blend into the backdrop of normal life. Instead, the abnormality exists, not in this man's skin, but in the eyes of those who refuse to behold him:

I am an invisible man. No. I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, under-

stand, simply because people refuse to see me . . . When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.¹

Though Ellison focuses upon a young African-American man struggling to define himself in the face of rampant racism in twentieth century America, many Hispanics find themselves in an analogous situation today.²

No longer will many Hispanics allow imposed labels to pervasively define them as ignorant, lazy, or inferior. Instead, Hispanics are beginning to see their value, and, gradually perhaps, even the stodgiest of institutions may begin to see the worth and inevitability of diversity. It is this value of diversity with which Ellison concludes his book:

Whence all this passion towards conformity anyway?—diversity is the word... Why, if they follow this conformity business they'll end up by forcing me, an invisible man, to become white, which is not a color but the lack of one. Must I strive towards colorlessness?... Our fate is to become one, and yet many—This is not prophecy, but description. Thus one of the greatest jokes in the world is the spectacle of the whites busy escaping blackness and becoming blacker every day, and the blacks striving toward whiteness, becoming quite dull and gray. None of us seems to know who he is or where he's going.³

To this black-white dyad of race, Latina/o communities are mixing “brown” into the color palette. With growing numbers and a greater sense of self-definition, Hispanics are making great strides in enhancing not only their own community's status but also ameliorating the situations of all through collaborative efforts to shape an inclusive, discursive space.⁴

Today and in the decades to come, the North American church faces a challenge from which it turns away at its own risk. This country is changing at a brisk rate but subtly enough to stir but ripples of concern in the popular imagination. The occasional news story will highlight the indisputable and burgeoning growth of Latinas/os in the United States, but little substantive analysis is brought to bear on the sociological and political repercussions of such a demographic shift. The church is no exception.

Paying relatively scant attention to the dynamic change of the racial and ethnic composition of the United States, many North American churches are populated by people who look alike, think alike, worship alike, and alike tend to hope that very little changes in their churches. Certainly, some multicultural churches purposefully seek a dynamic and thriving sense of diversity, but most are truly content with their respective mono-cultural enclaves. The aphorism that the most segregated hour in America occurs on Sunday mornings is tragically still an accurate depiction.

With the growing number of diverse cultures living within our national borders, the assimilative metaphor of the American melting pot has ceded its supremacy as national myth. Instead, any meaningful reassessment of the American cultural landscape will reveal that clear-cut cultural delineations are a relic of the past. Only sociological necessity motivated the U.S. census to create the ethnic category of “Hispanic” as Dr. Daisy Machado reminded us during a recent visit to our campus. A facile analysis of Hispanics as a homogeneous demographical mass oversimplifies a daedal cultural mosaic.

Central to any understanding of the experience of Hispanics in America is the bicultural experience that marks life both in the native land of origin as well as the adopted homeland. As Fernando Segovia avows, “As a Hispanic American, I belong to a large group of people for whom biculturalism constitutes a fundamental and inescapable way of life.”⁵ Tied intimately to the central concerns of *mestizaje* and *mulatez*, bicultural experience recognizes the value of cultural mixing. As Virgilio Elizondo once asserted, “...for us mixture is life and gives life.”⁶

And while one may expect such an experience to be an unmitigated benefit, in reality continual exile is often the end of biculturalism. Instead of claiming a sense of belongingness in two homes, Latinas/os frequently find themselves between two worlds, in some way or another rejected by both worlds as an alien.⁷ Segovia summarizes, “Thus our biculturalism results in a very paradoxical and alienating situation involving a continuous twofold existence as permanent strangers or aliens, as the permanent others.”⁸

This bicultural life is both perilous and liberating. Perilous in that one's personal identity is assailed from both sides, as the bicultural Hispanic never truly belongs in the exilic community or in the community from which she came. Liberating in that the bicultural person discovers the freedom of experiencing two

spheres of existence as both insider and outsider; this liberation can translate into the freedom and power to self-appropriate, self-define, and self-direct beyond the narrow confines of any single dominant culture.⁹ Thus, bicultural individuals can attain a hermeneutical edge in a cultural context wontedly monolingual and univocal in its construction of meaning. As Francisco García-Treto avers, "...from the margin, one can see things that the center cannot see about itself, and this can work out to the benefit of both center and margin."¹⁰

Though dominant portions of modern society—including the church—may continue to struggle against the inclusion of a diversity of voices in our church pews and pulpits, the natural inertia of entrenched modes of thought will resist the inevitable in vain. Justo González notes,

In other words, the church can find a dozen ways to tell ethnic minorities as well as other marginalized people that they are welcome in the church, but that their presence is a problem...Or, in contrast, the church can acknowledge that the problem is not with the latecomers. The problem is that as a church we live by a Spirit who has the uncomfortable habit of creating this sort of problem, of bringing in strange people, of making us sisters and brother to such people, of inviting us to serve and to partake at a table that is not our own.¹¹

The reality of this post-modern world includes the self-determination and self-definition of individuals and communities once deemed incapable of self-direction but who are now demanding a place at the table and not simply the crumbs of "learned" Western thought and belief.

In addition, Hispanics do not stand alone in this battle for the minds and hearts of Christian believers. Indeed, the allies of Hispanics include other marginalized groups in America as well as sisters and brothers struggling in the so-called "third world." Latinas/os are not a parochial oddity or an exotic, rare specimen at which the West can marvel but part of a larger constellation of marginalized perspectives prophetically proclaiming the gospel message of liberation. Segovia has provocatively entitled this revolution as an authentic "manifest destiny":

As such, the process of self-affirmation envi-

sioned is a process that confers dignity, liberation and openness not only on the group itself but on all other groups—a manifest destiny that goes against the very grain of manifest destiny, that re-defines and re-envision the very notion of manifest destiny.¹²

Until this "manifest destiny" becomes a reality, faithful Latinas/os will refuse to set aside their experiences, their culture, their language as a crutch, a handicap to be overcome. Instead, Hispanics will hold unswervingly to the gifts of God in language, culture, and gender. The word of God is not hampered by these personal and communal factors but enlivened in a dynamic way, empowered by the gift of a Holy Spirit confessed to shatter walls of oppression and overcome stagnant, oppressive forces demanding acclimation to a norm constructed solely by human hands. In the years to come, Ellison's prophecy will certainly resound in our minds:

Being invisible and without substance, a disembodied voice, as it were, what else could I do? What else but try to tell you what was really happening when your eyes were looking through? And it is this which frightens me: Who know[s] but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?¹³



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Notes

¹ Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1990), 3.

² The term "Hispanic" and "Latina/o" will be used interchangeably throughout this paper. While there is a great deal of debate within the community as to the appropriateness of these terms and their applicability to the community in question, current scholarship tends to utilize both terms freely. For further information, see Miguel A. De La Torre and Edwin David Aponte, *Introducing Latino/a Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 15-16.

³ Ellison, 577.

⁴ For an intriguing reflection on such critical work, see Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). Though densely written, Sandoval's work provides vital vocabulary, theory, and oppositional "technology" which Latinas/os can mine.

⁵ Fernando Segovia, "The Text As Other: Towards a Hispanic American Hermeneutic," in *Text & Experience*, ed. Daniel Smith-Christopher (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 286.

⁶ Quoted in Francisco García-Treto, "Reading the Hyphens: An Emerging Biblical Hermeneutics for Latino/Hispanic U.S. Protestants," in *Protestantes/Protestants*, ed. David Maldonado, Jr. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 162.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Fernando Segovia, "Reading the Bible as Hispanic Americans," in *The New Interpreter's Bible, Volume 8*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 171.

⁹ Fernando Segovia, "The Text As Other: Towards a Hispanic American Hermeneutic," in *Text & Experience: Towards a Cultural Exegesis of the Bible*, ed. Daniel Smith-Christopher (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 286-292.

¹⁰ Francisco García-Treto, "Hyphenating Joseph: A View of Genesis 39-41 from the Cuban Diaspora," in *Interpreting Beyond Borders*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 142.

¹¹ Justo L. González, "Reading from My Bicultural Space," in *Reading From This Place, Volume 1: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 146-147.

¹² Segovia, "The Text As Other," 291.

¹³ Ellison, 581.

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