

“Like many, I have defined racism individualistically. This approach allowed me to assume that since I didn’t have negative or prejudicial feelings toward African Americans and hadn’t, therefore, intentionally sought to disadvantage them, I wasn’t a racist. It also allowed me to remain ignorant of the history of racism in America and blind to its tenacious and pernicious presence in contemporary U.S. society.

I can’t think that way anymore.

Coming face to face with my complicity in supporting a racialized society has turned me inside out. The realization that I have benefited from a social and economic system that has been built through a shameful history of racially driven segregation, oppression, and injustice, even though I may not have intentionally perpetrated such acts, has challenged my sense of identity, my narrative of personal accomplishment, and the shallowness of my faith.”

—Mark Young, from the Foreword

Foreword by Mark Young

Introduction by Dieumème E. Noelliste

1. *Enlisting Theology in the Project of Human Reconciliation*

Dieumème E. Noelliste

2. *Mutual Love and Celebration: Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Race Relations on the Basis of Asian American Experience*

Sung Wook Chung

3. *Race: Can We Ever Get It Right?*

Carl F. Ellis, Jr.

4. *Facing a Piebald History: Toward a Transcultural Community of Christ*

Léonce B. Crump, Jr.

5. *Race Relations from the Hispanic Perspective: From Brokenness to Optimism*

Wilmer Ramírez

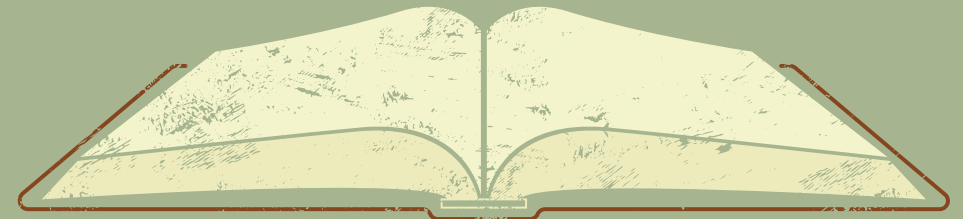
6. *Eating Frybread: Amnesia and Anamnesis*

Laurie M. Cassidy

Dr. Dieumème E. Noelliste is Professor of Theological Ethics and Director of the Vernon Grounds Institute of Public Ethics at Denver Seminary.

Confronting the Legacy of Racism:

The Challenge to Christian Faith



Dieumeme E. Noelliste, editor

Confronting the Legacy of Racism:

The Challenge to Christian Faith

Dieumème E. Noelliste, editor



MONOGRAPH SERIES

General Editors:

Dieumème E. Noelliste

M. Daniel Carroll R.

Previous Titles in the Series:

1. *Evangelicalism and Social Responsibility*
2. *Christians and Political Engagement*
3. *Justice and Health Care*
4. *Thinking Christianly about Immigration*
5. *Caring for Our Father's World*
6. *Children and Poverty: Christian Action against
Child Poverty*
7. *Human Flourishing through Economic
Discipleship*
8. *Exploring the Bases and Ethical Implications of
Capital Punishment*

© Copyright 2016 by Denver Seminary's Vernon
Grounds Institute of Public Ethics
All rights reserved.

CONTENTS

List of Contributors	i
Foreword	v
<i>Mark Young</i>	
Introduction	xv
<i>Dieumème E. Noelliste</i>	
1. Enlisting Theology in the Project of Human Reconciliation.....	1
<i>Dieumème E. Noelliste</i>	
2. Mutual Love and Celebration: Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Race Relations on the Basis of Asian American Experience	29
<i>Sung Wook Chung</i>	
3. Race: Can We Ever Get It Right?	49
<i>Carl F. Ellis, Jr.</i>	
4. Facing a Piebald History: Toward a Transcultural Community of Christ	79
<i>Léonce B. Crump, Jr.</i>	

5. Race Relations from the Hispanic Perspective: From Brokenness to Optimism	94
<i>Wilmer Ramírez</i>	

6. Eating Frybread: Amnesia and Anamnesis.....	122
<i>Laurie M. Cassidy</i>	

The Vernon Grounds Institute of Public Ethics.....	146
---	-----

CONTRIBUTORS

Laurie M. Cassidy (PhD, Loyola University) is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Marywood University in Scranton, Pennsylvania. She is coeditor, with Alex Mikulich, of the award-winning book *Interrupting White Privilege: Catholic Theologians Break the Silence* (Orbis, 2007).

Sung Wook Chung (DPhil, University of Oxford) is Professor of Christian Theology and Director of Korean Initiatives at Denver Seminary. He also serves as president and chair of the board at Kurios International and is coeditor, with Dieumème Noelliste, of *Diverse and Creative Voices: Theological Essays from the Majority World* (Pickwick, 2015).

Léonce B. Crump, Jr. is the founder and lead pastor of Renovation Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Holding graduate degrees from the University of Tennessee, Resurgence Theological Training Center, and Reformed Theological Seminary, he is also the author of *Renovate: Changing Who You Are by Loving Where You Are* (Multnomah, 2016).

Carl F. Ellis, Jr. (DPhil, Oxford Graduate School) is Assistant Professor of Practical Theology at Redeemer Seminary in Dallas, Texas. He is also the author of *Free at Last? The Gospel in the African-American Experience* (InterVarsity, 1996).

Dieumème E. Noelliste (PhD, Northwestern University) is Professor of Theological Ethics and Director of the Vernon Grounds Institute of Public Ethics at Denver Seminary. He is also adjunct Professor of Theology at the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology in Kingston, Jamaica.

Wilmer Ramírez, currently a PhD candidate at Biola University, is Instructor of Hispanic Studies and Bible and Director of Hispanic Initiatives at Denver Seminary. He is the founder and former director of Edificar Ministries in Guatemala, where he published Bible study materials for underserved churches in Central America.

Mark Young (PhD, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) currently serves as President of Denver Seminary. He is a theological educator and pastoral leader with over 35 years of global ministry experience.

FOREWORD

At its June meeting last year, the trustees of Denver Seminary approved the formation of a Race Relations Working Group to examine the history and current state of the Seminary's relationship with the African American church community in Denver. Members of that group included trustees—Eddie Broussard, Ted Travis, Patricia Raybon, and Bryan Wilkerson—a student, Brandon Washington, the Director of our Urban Initiative, Felix Gilbert, and me.

Interaction with this group has been very beneficial in my personal journey of learning and growing concern about racism. This journey led to the creation of a document entitled “Racism: A Reflection and a Prayer.” Crafted with the help of the members of the Race Relations Working Group, it also includes the voices of many other African American friends, authors, and leaders. It is by no means a perfect or even significant document. It is raw and personal and, like its author, deeply flawed. It is, however, honest and heart-felt.

After hearing and discussing this reflection and prayer, the trustees and the faculty of Denver Seminary voted unanimously to endorse its sentiment and substance. It was also presented at the Rally for the Common Good, the final event in a year-long

consideration of racism by the Vernon Grounds Institute of Public Ethics.

Our commitment at Denver Seminary is to honestly address the need for us to build better relationships with minority communities. This personal reflection and prayer has created opportunities for many deep, honest, and earnest conversations. We offer it to you with the prayer that it might somehow do the same in your communities of faith.

Racism: A Reflection and a Prayer

Just two weeks after becoming the president of Denver Seminary in the summer of 2009, I had the privilege of meeting with a group of African American church leaders in the city. Even in that first conversation, it became clear to me that an undercurrent of tension existed between the Seminary and many in the black community.

Unfortunately, that tension remains, sometimes more obvious than at other times, but always simmering beneath the surface. Efforts intended to bring about resolution have seemed not only ineffective but sometimes even managed to aggravate the problem. This tension has confounded and befuddled me.

A couple of years ago, an African American friend asked, “Mark, are you a racist?” His question

stunned me. I didn't know how to answer and didn't do so for what felt like an eternity. Finally, I heard my voice saying, "I don't think so." That was a beginning. The question has haunted me ever since.

The series of very public tragedies in 2014 and 2015 that resulted in the deaths of African Americans at the hands of police officers roiled our nation and raised troubling questions about systemic racism. Even more troubling were the different narratives and interpretations of these events that emerged in the black and white communities. Generally speaking, the white narrative interpreted these events as stories of individual actions while African Americans saw them as evidences of systemic, racially driven injustice. How could these two communities, even in the church, hold such divergent views of what had happened?

Then came the massacre in the Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC. A white man sat at the table with the people of God, tasted their hospitality, and murdered nine of them simply because they were black. Naked racism, pure evil, assaulted the sensibilities of our nation. While grieving that tragedy, another troubling question emerged in my heart and mind. "Whereas it was easy to see the mass murder in Charleston as racially motivated, why was it harder for me as a white man to see the other events as such?"

And that question kept ringing in my ears,
“Mark, are you a racist?”

Like many, I have defined racism individually. This approach allowed me to assume that since I didn’t have negative or prejudicial feelings toward African Americans and hadn’t, therefore, intentionally sought to disadvantage them, I wasn’t a racist. It also allowed me to remain ignorant of the history of racism in America and blind to its tenacious and pernicious presence in contemporary U.S. society.

I can’t think that way anymore. Several books, articles, and conversations have begun to chip away at my ignorance and indifference. “Aha” moments, troubling questions, and painful realizations have been my companions along the way. I’m not yet far enough along to speak with any measure of confidence on these matters, but some key learnings are reshaping my thinking significantly:

1. Thinking of racism as more of a multidimensional social reality than an individual prejudice has helped alleviate my tendency to see it as someone else’s problem and, thus, ignore it. In their book *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, authors Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith propose the phrase

“racialized society” as a starting point to better understand the problem of racism. They write that a racialized society is “a society wherein race matters profoundly for differences in life experiences, life opportunities, and social relationships.” Professor Robin DiAngelo, writing as a white American, understands racism as “a system that ensures an unequal distribution of resources between racial groups.”

2. Because whites have more power in all of the significant social institutions in U.S. society, we benefit from a racialized society and fail to recognize that fact in our own sense of accomplishment and success. Frankly, we seldom think of the influence of race or racism in our own lives. As a result we too quickly and too easily deny that racism remains a social reality that negatively affects the lives of millions.
3. Many of us in the white community are uncomfortable talking about race and racism because it challenges our detachment from racial issues. As DiAngelo writes, “We move through a racialized world with an unracialized identity. . . . Challenges to this identity become highly stressful and even intolerable. . . . We perceive any attempt to connect us to the system of

racism as a very unsettling and unfair moral offense.”

4. Most of us are unwilling to admit that we have chosen to live segregated lives in the places we reside, work, play, worship, and send our kids to school. We make these choices as an expression of deeply held values of comfort, security, and opportunity. Yet we seldom, if ever, would admit that the choice to live segregated lives may come from deeply buried desires to live apart from blacks. In living segregated lives, we live impoverished lives and we communicate that we see little intrinsic value in building deep and abiding relationships with African Americans.
5. Because we do not see ourselves as part of the problem of racism, and because we do not recognize how pervasive and destructive its ongoing presence is to our society, we do not readily engage in actions that prophetically rebuke racial inequality and racist behavior. Our silence makes us tacit supporters of a racialized society and complicit in its perpetuation.

“Mark, are you a racist?”

Coming face to face with my complicity in supporting a racialized society has turned me inside out. The realization that I have benefited from a

social and economic system that has been built through a shameful history of racially driven segregation, oppression, and injustice, even though I may not have intentionally perpetrated such acts, has challenged my sense of identity, my narrative of personal accomplishment, and the shallowness of my faith. At times it felt as if the sky was falling. But it didn't. What is falling is my willingness to deny, to explain away, and to be indifferent to the scourge of racism.

As I struggled to express my thoughts and feelings in this journey, Patricia Raybon, a Denver Seminary trustee and member of the Race Relations Working Group, recommended that I write them out as if I were speaking with God. What emerged from that advice is this prayer of lament, repentance, and commitment.

Have mercy on me, O Lord.

I have blinded my eyes. In spite of the clear evidence of deeply embedded racism all around me, I have looked the other way. Too many have died. Too many have suffered. Too many have been locked out and cast aside. Too many indignities. Too many injustices. And still I looked the other way.

Have mercy on me, O Lord.

I have hardened my heart. Believing the lie that blacks have the same opportunities as whites, I could not allow myself to admit that my life was shaped as much by racism as theirs—mine to benefit and theirs to harm. But it was and it is and it will continue to be. I have cared too little. I have grieved too little.

Have mercy on me, O Lord.

I have silenced my tongue. My voice has not been raised in prophetic rebuke and anger. My feet have not stepped out for justice alongside those who have more courage than I. And in my silence I am an accomplice to bigotry.

Forgive me, O Lord.

I have sinned against you and against those who suffer the evil of racism. Indifference has smothered my soul and snuffed out fleeting impulses for reconciliation. I ask for your forgiveness and I will appropriately seek their forgiveness.

Empower me, O Lord.

I need your strength to step beyond blindness, indifference, and fear; to step toward those whom I have sinned against. I make no grandiose promises or plans today for I know how easily these can be made

*and forgotten. But this I know. I cannot be the same.
And I will not.
Amen!*

This is my prayer. I have shared it with the trustees and the faculty of Denver Seminary and I humbly share it with you. I do not presume to make it the prayer of others. But I can say that as the president of Denver Seminary, it reflects my heart to lead this school to a new place in our relationship with the African American community. I ask for your patience, forbearance, and willingness to speak truth to me in love when I fall short of its sentiment and substance. And I ask for your help in bringing resolution to a tension that has lingered far too long between us.

Mark Young

INTRODUCTION

The volume set before you comes ninth in an established and growing Vernon Grounds Institute of Public Ethics Monograph Series. Since its establishment about nine years ago, the institute has been publishing small volumes like this on a variety of social and ethical issues that it explores throughout the academic year. It does so in pursuit of its mission of equipping Christians to be salt and light in the world. We are very excited about the release of this volume on the important theme of race relations.

The book is entitled *Confronting the Legacy of Racism: The Challenge to Christian Faith*. By itself, this title gives it a uniqueness and, I dare say, an edge over the volumes previously published in the series. For one thing, by tackling an issue that Christians typically would not even address, the book displays incredible courage and boldness.

Furthermore, the book is timely and current. Racism has been part of the American landscape since the very inception of the nation. But recent events seem to indicate that racial tensions have reached a hazardous boiling point. This explains the urgent call from various quarters for frank and candid dialogue, as well as a *modus vivendi* that is conducive to societal peace.

Moreover, the book is immensely practical. It not only challenges Christians to face the nagging legacy of racism head-on; it contains insightful suggestions as to how this can be done in various spheres of life.

The Bible makes clear that the promotion of the moral health of society is an essential part of the *raison d'être* of the people of God (Matt. 5:13–15; Phil. 2:12–16). Scripture is also clear that the existence of harmonious relationships among the various racial and ethnic groups that make up a society is essential to societal wholeness (Isa. 11:1ff.; Eph. 2:12ff.). Given all this, a book that stirs the people of God to take seriously this aspect of their mission is an invaluable resource for such a time as this.

The essays published here were delivered at the various events hosted by the Grounds Institute during the 2015–2016 academic year. The first event occurred in October, 2015, under the hospices of the Kent Mathews Endowed Lectureship in Social Ethics, which was held on the main seminary campus. Next came the Salt and Light Seminar and the Rally for the Common Good on April 14, 2016 held respectively on the same campus and at Restoration Christian Fellowship in Aurora, Colorado. Besides these three major events, two smaller-scale seminars were staged at the seminary's two extension sites in Washington,

DC (March 10, 2016), and Amarillo, Texas (April 16, 2016).

The book opens with Dieumeme Noelliste's chapter titled "Enlisting Theology in the Project of Human Reconciliation." In this essay, Noelliste draws attention to the sad reality of racial division within the church and contends that if the church is to lead society with integrity in combating social strife, it must address the problem within its own ranks. In order to do that, Noelliste argues that, as *ecclesia semper reformanda*, the church must pursue self-renewal. This task, he avers, can be pursued through self-criticism, the adoption of a critical stance vis a vis societal assumptions and ethos that run contrary to the gospel, and through serious engagement with the tenets of Christian faith. With respect to the latter suggestion, Noelliste draws attention to three pairs of Christian doctrine which, he believes, make a compelling case against racist attitudes, and for racial harmony and reconciliation. They are the doctrines of God and humanity, the doctrines of Christ and salvation, and the doctrines of the Holy Spirit and the church.

In the next contribution, Korean theologian Sung Wook Chung advances and deepens the broad theological argument for racial harmony introduced in Noelliste's essay. Addressing the theme from an Asian perspective, Chung grounds his proposal for

racial reconciliation firmly in Trinitarian theology. Specifically, his essay lays stress on the display of unity and diversity within the Godhead, the mutual indwelling or *perichoresis* that characterizes the mode of being of the divine persons, and the *koinonia*, fellowship, love and service that order the way they relate to each other. Chung is confident that if Christians were to model their relationship on the pattern exhibited in the Trinity, their communal life would display a *modus vivendi* marked by mutual respect, celebration, love and service.

The next contribution comes from the pen of the senior African American theologian Carl Ellis and goes directly to the heart of the issue: “Race: Can We Ever Get It Right?” In attempting to answer this question, Ellis delves into the various causes of human conflict, identifying oppression, power, and marginalization as chief culprits. These, he argues, create discord and abusive relationships in several areas of life, giving rise to such misguided concepts as “meism”, sexism, ethnocentrism, and racism in its various expressions: institutionalized, personalized, and internationalized. Ellis is clear that the root cause of these dysfunctional relationships is our fallen condition and the trail of sins that it unleashes. In light of this, Ellis believes that the answer to the question he poses in the title of the essay lies in a solution to the sin problem, both in our lives and in

the world. The restraint of sin, he avers, would result in a posture of attentiveness toward others and the empowerment of those and who belong to the subdominant cultures who tend to be the victims of racism. To his mind, this is the only way to get the race issue right.

The essay that follows Ellis's is a contribution of another African American leader—the Rev. Leonce Crump. Crump's essay fills an important gap in the book. It introduces the reader to the history of slavery in the United States, and the various expressions of racism and systemic injustice that have been, and continue to be, part of the country's social landscape. Crump helpfully rehearses for the reader the *modus operandi* of chattel slavery, Reconstruction (1863-1877), Jim Crow legislations (1877-1965), and the modern forms of oppression. But if Crump brings that ugly legacy to the surface, it is precisely with the view to pointing the way toward its eradication. Hence, basing himself firmly on Scripture, he sees the way forward in intentionally prioritizing our Christian identity as *Christianoi* over the other things that tend to define us, such as ethnicity, and socio economic status. Though difficult, he is confident that such a stance will not only help us combat our piebald history, but it will also put us on a course toward the gospel shaped vision of the church as a transcultural and heterogeneous community.

If Chung, Ellis, and Crump tackle to problem of racism, respectively, from an Asian and an African American perspective, Wilmer Ramirez puts before us the meaning of that reality for the Hispanic community. Taking into account the recent numerical growth of the Hispanic population in the United States, and basing himself upon the findings of current research in the field of sociology, Ramirez argues that the current strength of the Hispanic presence in the country has transformed the racial dynamics from the traditional binary black/white divide into a tri-racial reality that involves blacks, whites, and Hispanics. Examining the implications of this new reality for the future of race relations in the country, Ramirez reviews four main scenarios, which, in the end, he finds wanting. In the face of the inadequacies of these proposals, he turns to the missionary praxis of Jesus and the transforming power of the gospel as the way forward. Ramirez sees in Jesus a fourth player whose example is capable of instilling in the three ethnic groups a spirit of interracial service. This, he avers, introduces into the mix a fifth scenario “where not only three but more groups could find a safe, just and welcoming environment in which to live and thrive”.

Fittingly, the volume closes with a contribution from a representative of the majority culture who, however, speaks to the issue from the perspective of

another minority and historically oppressed group—the Native Americans. The input is provided by Roman Catholic theologian and ethicist Laurie Cassidy who draws attention to the reality of white privilege and its negative implications for race relations. In the essay, Cassidy asserts that because of an *amnesia* of the history of oppression, suffering, and pain endured by the minority groups at the hand of the dominant group, “whiteness” tends to harbor an obliuiousness, ignorance, and insensitivity to the realities of racism. She points to the Native American frybread as a vivid illustration of this sad truth. The remedy, she argues lies in the historical “conversion” of her fellow whites. Such a conversion involves an awakening from *amnesia* and the embrace of *anamnesis*—the remembering of real and truthful history, including its ugly moments. Only in our communal “consumption” of that history is there the possibility of reconciliation.

I would like to express heartfelt thanks to the leadership at Denver Seminary for providing a safe and inviting environment in which to address this issue; the leadership of the Greater Metro Denver Ministerial Alliance and the nearby African American community for their willingness to dialogue with the seminary on this thorny issue during the course of the year; the contributors for their thoughtful and engaging essays; and Amanda Schneider, Educational

Services Coordinator at Denver Seminary, for her technological assistance in the preparation of the manuscript. I also want to express special thanks to Brandon Benziger for the assistance he has given me in the final stage of the editing of this volume. His eye for details has considerably enhanced the quality of the book.

Finally, the institute releases this modest book to the public with the prayer and hope that it will be used of God to stir a diverse and racially fragmented church to be intentional in its pursuit of peace, unity, and reconciliation for its own health, the wellbeing of society, and more importantly, the glory of God.

Dieumème E. Noelliste

ENLISTING THEOLOGY IN THE PROJECT OF HUMAN RECONCILIATION¹

Dieumème E. Noelliste

We live in a deeply divided world. Although the modern world has shrunk into a global village, it is far from being united. It is beset with all sorts of divisions. It is rocked by ideological tensions, political rivalries, divergent interests, clashing perspectives, and competing worldviews. Sadly, in the midst of this divided world stands a divided church. Like the world, the church is fractured in several ways. Within it, one finds mega ecclesiastical traditions, denominational splintering, competing ideological alignments, and opposing theological positions.

¹ This essay is reprinted, in slightly revised form, from Pauline C. H. Kollontai and Victoria Nesfield, eds., *Building Communities of Reconciliation, Volume III: Christian Theologies of Peace and Reconciliation* (Seoul, Korea: Nanumsa, 2012), 78–94. Reprinted with permission.

The Problem of a Divided Church in a Divided World

To be sure, these disjunctions don't manifest themselves to the same extent in every place where the church is found. In some places, like some parts of Africa, the division is predominantly tribal. A missionary friend who has served in western Africa for many years reported that at one point tribal animosity was so strong that fellowship among Christians belonging to rival tribes was impossible. Indeed, church history will have to deal with the painful truth that it was in predominantly Christian Rwanda that tribal warfare has caused one of the bloodiest cases of genocide of the twentieth century.

In other places, such as the Caribbean islands, the dominant factor of separation within the church is class or social status. To be sure, the forty million souls who populate that region are by no means racially or culturally monolithic. In that vast basin, which is sprinkled with miniscule territories and encircled by midsize mainlands, one finds a real racial melting pot. There, one meets the original Amerindians, the forcibly removed Africans, the transplanted Chinese, the mercantile Arabs, and the enterprising Jews. Additionally, as historian Alvin Thompson has shown, interracial crossbreeding has produced a varied gradation of color

categories that is tantamount to a magnificent rainbow.² During the colonial era, this racial and color structure determined the pattern of social interaction. Today, while vestiges of the colonial attitude remain, the leading discriminating criterion is one's place in the social ladder. The social polarities tend to be elite versus masses, uptown versus downtown, peasant versus town dweller, haves versus have-nots. And by and large, in many places, the church reflects this social stratification.

Still in other parts of the world, such as South Africa and the United States, the primary impediment to Christian unity and fellowship continues to be race. In these societies, the church consists, in the main, of enclaves of racially homogeneous groups. Race

² Alvin O. Thompson, *The Haunting Past: Politics, Economics, and Race in Caribbean Life* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 1997), 224. According to Thompson, the following color scheme is found among the people of the Caribbean and Latin America in general. "*Tawny* (offspring of black and mulatto), *mulatto* (offspring of black and white), *quadroon* (offspring of mulatto and white), *mustee* (offspring of quadroon and white), *mustifino* (offspring of mustee and white), *quintroon* (offspring of mustifino and white) and *octroon* (offspring of quintroon and white). In Curacao the discriminating terms included *sambo*, *grief*, *mestiche*, *castiche*, and *poestiche*. Usually, a person four or five gradations removed from his or her black ancestry would be regarded as white." Variations in pigmentation produced by other racial crossings include: *Mestizo* (mixture of Amerindians and Europeans); *Zambilgo* (mixture of Amerindian and African); *Dougle* or *rial* (mixture of African and East Indian).

functions as chief conveyor of ecclesial identity and distinctiveness. Thus, we speak of the church as white, black, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, etc. Christians who attend the same school, play together, and work at the same place during the week find themselves worshipping separately on Sunday! It has been observed that in the United States the worship hour is the most segregated hour of the week. Or to put it another way, Christian churches are the most unicolored and homogeneous places in town.

To many Christians, the prevailing situation is troubling. They lament the divisive effect that the scandal of racism continues to have on the church. And they see it as a problem that needs to be overcome.³ Whether based on tribe, class, or race, the compartmentalization of the church is a serious problem. To begin with, it is contrary to the Lord's wish that the church be one and that, through this manifest unity, it would present a compelling witness to the world. In John 17:20–23, Jesus beseeches the Father that all believers—present and future—may be one, just as he and the Father are one.⁴ He wants them to be united with one another and with the triune God

³ At the recently concluded Lausanne Congress held in Cape Town, South Africa, Brenda Saulter-McNeil indicated that the sentiments mentioned in this paragraph were expressed by no lesser a figure than American evangelist Billy Graham.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotes are from the NIV 2011.

so that the world may know and believe “that you have sent me” (v. 21).

Moreover, the specter of a divided church in a divided world goes against the biblical vision of the eschatological church as a united yet heterogeneous company. The book of Revelation refers to the church collectively as the Bride (19:7). But the bride in question turns out to be a countless, multiethnic, international, and racially plural congregation at worship in one place: before the throne (7:9). And if one asks what the qualification is for admission and membership in that mega-church, the text answers that the sole criterion is the experience of redemption. The text could not be clearer. It states: “they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, ‘they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple’” (Rev. 7:14, 15).

Clearly, if all of this is true, the current state of affairs constitutes an untenable situation and, as such, it needs to be addressed. For if the church is to be an agent of reconciliation and peace in a world rent asunder by conflicts of all sorts, integrity demands that it attend to the problem of division that is wreaking havoc within its own rank. From the perspective of the Reformation, the church is *ecclesia semper reformanda*. It is an entity that stands in need of constant renewal. This task is worth pursuing

because, “Even in a deeply divided world, even in the most deeply divided relationship, *the way things are is not the way they have to be.*”⁵ But how should this be achieved? What needs to happen in order to bring down the walls that compartmentalize the church and thereby compromise its integrity and emphasize its weakness? This paper offers a modest proposal that highlights three imperatives that must be embraced if renewal is to occur. Underlying them all is the assumption that a self-critical posture is a prerequisite for genuine renewal. In the absence of rigorous self-examination, complacency tends to set in and stagnancy becomes the order of the day.

We Must Acknowledge the Problem

A major reason for the perpetuation of this problem is the virtual absence of its acknowledgement. It appears that the fragmentation of the church has become so ingrained that most Christians take it for granted and accept it as normal. The tendency is to erect a wall of silence around the issue or to rationalize it when it does come up. It seems to me that if there is any chance of changing the current status quo, it is imperative that its incongruity be acknowledged and be made a point of discussion. Just

⁵ Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice, *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008), 13 (emphasis theirs).

as there are dialogues currently taking place among various segments of the church on several issues of concern, so there is a need for a conversation on the issues that have caused a rift within the ecclesial community.

We Must Make a Shift in Our Hermeneutical Paradigm

In the foregoing paragraph, I made reference to the absence of disquiet regarding the prevailing situation. This at once prompts the question, “Why”? To my mind, a probable answer can be found in the cultural correctness of the practice. Since the attitude adopted by the church conforms to the general societal pattern and mindset, its problematical character goes unnoticed. When it is raised, often it is downplayed or explained away. Indeed, sometimes homogeneity and sameness are even hailed as an asset. Hence, proponents of the homogeneous-unit principle have promoted the cultural inclination toward the “birds-of-a-feather-flock-together” sentiment as an acceptable missiological strategy, irrespective of the challenge that it poses for the biblical emphasis on ecclesial inclusiveness and heterogeneity.

How is this possible? Several culprits could be identified, but a major reason seems to reside in granting to culture a hermeneutical role that it should not have. Often unwittingly, and sometimes quite

wittingly, cultural conformity functions as the interpretive key for the unlocking of scriptural meaning and consequent “Christian” practice. When this happens, the culture swallows up and disfigures the gospel. The gospel thus becomes the slave of culture rather than being the ferment by which culture is challenged and transformed. A vivid example of this can be seen in the history of Christian attitudes toward slavery. As Kevin Giles has shown in his book *The Trinity and Subordinationism*, for centuries the dominant church consistently adopted a pro-slavery stance. In this it was aided by some of its best minds, who argued vehemently that God not only legitimized the institution of slavery but actually ordained it! They were confident that this alleged ordination of perpetual servitude was grounded in the doctrine of racial superiority.⁶ Today, no right-thinking person defends a pro-slavery theology. The prevalent view regards slavery for what it really is: an absurd, evil, and sinful institution created by humans, which was antithetical to the gospel and contradictory to the overall tenor of the will of God revealed in Scripture. If one wonders how these Christians could have gotten it so wrong, Giles locates the answer in the adoption and the application of a system of

⁶ Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 222–26.

interpretation that was captive to the prevailing cultural ethos and subservient to the interest of the status quo.⁷ Sadly, this faulty hermeneutic pitted the Bible against itself by elevating its culturally conditioned and thus descriptive content above its perennial and normative message of love and freedom.

If history teaches us anything, it is the need for the church in any generation to avoid succumbing to the temptation of cultural captivity. This necessitates the transfer of the hermeneutical lever from the hand of culture to the hand of the gospel. It demands that cultural conformity yields to the ongoing critique of the gospel. As Karl Barth has rightly said, the gospel is unique because it is “a Word from the Beyond for our human predicament.”⁸ If the gospel is God’s transcultural and transcendent message, then clearly it is always culture that needs to be adjusted under the judgment of the gospel, rather than the gospel under the pressure of culture. When this happens, wherever it is located, the church will not feel constrained to do what the culture endorses, desires, and dictates, but what the gospel teaches, demands, and requires.

⁷ Ibid., 230–31, 247–49.

⁸ Quoted in Archibald M. Hunter, *Introducing the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 14.

We Must Take Theology More Seriously

Besides a shift from a culture-laden hermeneutic to a system of interpretation that is informed by God's grand narrative revealed in Scripture, there is the need for a firm grasp of the tenets of the faith that we profess, as well as the conscious and intentional actualization of its beliefs within the ecclesial community itself. It is our firm conviction that a theology or an exposition of Christian faith that finds its grounding in Scripture and that engages the world and the church in an ongoing, critical, and prophetic conversation has the requisite resources to overcome the ecclesial problem that faces us. Literally, all the grand themes that come to form the body of Christian faith can be enlisted in this enterprise. I will appeal only to three pairs of these mega doctrinal constricts. I refer to God and humanity, Christ and redemption, and the Holy Spirit and the church.

God and Humanity

Scripture is replete with teaching about God and the special creatures he has created—human beings. This teaching gives great insight into the various aspects of these themes. However, when one seeks to grasp the relevance of these twin doctrines for the question of peace and harmony among people in general and within the church in particular, Paul's discourse in Acts 17 is one of the passages that cries for priority.

In that speech delivered to the Athenian philosophers (Acts 17:24–31), Paul articulates a concept of God and humanity that is startling by its indifference to racial belonging, its lack of concern about pigmentation, and its disinterest in socially generated background issues that normally divide. Before a Greek intelligentsia steeped in the ideology of racial differentiation and the attendant attitude of racial superiority, Paul presents the biblical God as a God who relates indiscriminately to all humans. To Paul, God is not one of those parochial deities whose power and authority is restricted to particular territorial domains. No, he is the universal God who rules sovereignly over all of creation by virtue of the fact that he is the sole creator of everything and everyone (v. 24). In his capacity as creator, he gives life indiscriminately to everyone and consequently functions as humanity's common progenitor (v. 25). As Paul says elsewhere, creationally all humans share God as a common Father from whom they derive their name (Eph. 3:15). He is the only being who can do this because as a being endowed with self-existence and eternality (v. 25), he has life in himself. He depends on no one and nothing for life and sustenance. But so as to remove all possibility of racial superiority based on a claim to a greater share of his being, God has chosen to impart life to humans not by way of sharing an element of himself with

humanity but by providing it with a common ancestor: “From one man [or one blood] he made all the nations” (v. 26). This means that ontologically all humans are of the same pedigree.

Commenting on this passage, F. F. Bruce states:

The Creator of all things in general is the Creator of [hu]mankind in particular. The Athenians might pride themselves on being autochthonous—sprung from the soil of their native Attica—but this pride was ill-founded. All mankind was one in origin—all created by God and all descended from one common ancestor. This removed all imagined justification for the belief that Greeks were innately superior to barbarians, as it removes all imagined justification for parallel beliefs today. Neither in nature nor in grace—neither in the old creation or in the new—is there any room for ideas of racial superiority.⁹

Should one be inclined to claim special privilege and status on grounds other than the ontological, Paul says that this too is inappropriate. For like life, humanity’s existence depends on God’s providential

⁹ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 357–58.

care and sovereign governance. It is in him that we all “live and move and have our being” (v. 28). It is to him that we will all render account at the end of our existence (v. 31). The very nations to which we belong have been sovereignly designated by him (v. 26).

If we branch out from this watershed text and cast a glance on the broader landscape of Scripture, we find some complementary truths that reinforce the point Paul is making here. To begin with, Scripture is clear that all who are created by God receive the same status. Without exception, they all bear the divine image (Gen. 1:26, 27). Now regardless of how we understand the meaning of the *imago Dei*, one thing should be clear: the image of God is at one and the same time the mark of humanity’s distinctiveness from the rest of creation and the index of equality among humans. As bearers of the divine image, all of humanity stands just a little lower than God and has been crowned with honor and glory (Ps. 8:5). Further, those so created (which means all humans) are endowed with the same worth. According to Scripture, the creational process was not an undifferentiated mass production. Rather, it was and continues to be an individual one that involves nothing less than the masterful weaving and skillful knitting of every human soul by the very hand of God himself. It is because of this that every single one of

these works of art is intimately known by God. David confesses: “My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body” (Ps. 139:15–16). Jesus corroborates the psalmist’s insight by saying that “even the very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matt. 10:30). It is no wonder that all human beings so created are endowed with a dignity that is intrinsic to their very being and integral to their very person. What is more, by imparting such lofty status and high dignity to humanity, God has, by that same token, conferred upon every person a worth that nothing else can excel. Every human life is deemed non-exchangeable due to the fact that the accumulated value of the whole world is not sufficient to equate its net worth (Matt. 16:26).

Now, it is common but sad knowledge that the glorious picture I just painted does not represent the complete profile of the human person provided by the Bible. Besides being creatures of glory, humans are also creatures of shame. This shame is the consequence of the distortion of the divine image, which resulted from humanity’s fallen condition. But what we should bear in mind is that the state of sinfulness cannot serve as a discriminating criterion since it is itself the common lot of humanity. As Paul declares, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory

of God” (Rom. 3:23). Just as humans are one in their God-given glory, so they are one in their sin-inflicting shame. It is no wonder that in attempting to dismantle Peter’s prejudice and Jewish bias against the Gentiles, God revealed to him that he does not show favoritism or make exception of persons (Acts 10:34). Neither is it surprising that long before God’s rebuke of Peter, Abraham found in this concept of our shared humanity the resource necessary to avert a conflict between him and his nephew Lot. In the face of a shortage of grazing land to support their growing herds, war was initially seen as the way to solve the crisis. But based on his deep-seated conviction that he and Lot were united by a human bond that was much stronger than material possessions, he exhibited a magnanimity of spirit that is stunning and exemplary. “Let’s not have any quarreling between you and me,” he counseled his junior partner, “for *we are close relatives*” (Gen. 13:8, my emphasis).

Christ and Redemption

Jesus Christ and the salvation that he came to bring form another pair of doctrines that are relevant for our struggle against global and ecclesial divisiveness. Any serious reflection on the biblical teaching about Christ should reveal at once several facets of that doctrine that militate against the splintering of the

church, whether along the lines of race, ethnicity, class, or social status.

Of primary importance here is the bedrock doctrine of the incarnation. This doctrine holds that in the person of Jesus, God himself assumed genuine human nature. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). In Jesus, he who existed in the form of God, and was by nature God, became human (Phil. 2:6–7). In doing so, he graced all of humanity (including the human body) with a dignity that is of the highest order. Christian faith made this bold assertion in a cultural context that proclaimed the unworthiness of human nature. In doing this, it was truly countercultural. It swam against the prevailing cultural tide. But here, again, it is important to stress that the dignity that flows from the incarnation has been bestowed on humanity as a whole, since it was human nature itself that the Logos assumed. Hence, the incarnational dignity is shared indiscriminately by every member of the human species, irrespective of their sociological background.

If we move from the incarnation of Christ to his life and social teaching, it becomes clear that both by his teaching and action Jesus displayed complete disregard for, and unmistakable disapproval of, discrimination of any kind. In a socially conscious society, Jesus unapologetically befriended the outcast and those who were then considered the lowest level

of society (Luke 19:1–9). He incurred the wrath of the religious establishment by socializing with sinners and the morally compromised (Luke 7:36–39). In an environment charged with racial consciousness, he exploded the myth of racial superiority by intentionally engaging an adulterous Samaritan woman in conversation (John 4:1–27). He even went further. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, he demonstrated that a despised Samaritan could exhibit a level of mercy and social concern that a devout Jew was incapable of (Luke 10:25–37). All of this was meant to signal his intention to create a community that would be known for its inclusivism—in contrast to the exclusionary elitism of the mainstream religious establishment.

Even Christ’s redemptive work, which is traditionally highlighted for its spiritual significance for humanity, has a social import that should not be missed. That import is seen in the fact that this supreme act of self-giving love was designed to bring rehabilitation to an equally guilty and fallen humanity. Because Christ’s redemptive mission was a response to humanity’s fallen condition, his death on the cross had to display God’s unbounded love for the entire world. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). In complete agreement with John, Paul declares that,

in Christ, God sought to reconcile the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:9). In their book entitled *Your God Is Too White*, Ronald Behm and Columbus Salley capture the social implication of Christ's redemptive work this way:

The supreme action of Jesus Christ demonstrating his repudiation of racism and discrimination was his self-sacrificial crucifixion for the guilt of the world. Indeed, the whole purpose of God becoming [human] and sharing [humanity's] suffering was to die for the selfishness, bigotry, discrimination, inhumanity and rebellion of *all* [people] who would put their trust in him, regardless of their economic, political, social, or racial status. His death on the cross is applicable on equal terms of faith and repentance to all [people]. That those people were to be from all nations and races of the world is clear from Jesus' command to his apostles to, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations' On the basis of the universal redemption in Jesus Christ, any group that calls itself Christian and discriminates against a race or class is simply rejecting the biblical, Christian pattern.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ronald Behm and Columbus Salley, *Your God Is Too White* (Berkhamsted, UK: Lion, 1973), 110–11.

The Redeemer is not only our atoning sacrifice and Savior; he is also our Peacemaker. In saving, he also breaks social barriers and brings people together. His purpose on the cross was not only to save isolated souls but also to put into effect a new radical truce—the *Pax Christi*. As Paul himself explains, “[God’s] purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near” (Eph. 2:15–17). Behm and Salley’s comment on this text is worth attention:

The New Testament church was not composed of nice, tacky-tacky, middle-class people. Rather, the unity of faith overcame the potential divisions of social and racial barriers which were everywhere present. The meek and mild, white, Nordic Jesus is phony—at best a product of ignorant ethnocentrism, at worst of white racism. Jesus is not the God of white people; he is the God of the universe and his death for the rebellion of this world applies to people of all races.¹¹

¹¹ Ibid.

The Holy Spirit and the Church

The Holy Spirit is another barrier breaker. Now, it is true that his ministry is profoundly personal and internal. It consists in the working out of spiritual regeneration, the empowerment of believers for service, the living of the new life, and the provision of certitude with respect to our new status in Christ, our standing before God, and our relationship with him (John 3:5–9; Titus 3:3–5; 1 Cor. 12:4–11; Gal. 4:4–7; Rom. 8:15–17). But this internal work does not exhaust the full extent of his ministry. His ministry also includes the effecting of unity in the body of Christ. The Spirit is the agent of Christian oneness and brother- and sisterhood. The indwelling of the Spirit is an initial and universal blessing given to all *authentic* believers as the distinguishing mark of the people of Christ (Rom. 8:9; Eph. 1:30), regardless of their social background. Paul is categorical on this point: “[I]f anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ” (Rom. 8:9). In case one sees this as something that obtains in the spiritual domain only, Paul clarifies that the activity of the Spirit is intended to bring about a society marked by the oneness of its erstwhile estranged members:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12–13 KJV).

Elsewhere, Paul declares that all who belong to Christ have been sealed or branded by the Spirit. This sealing specifies their identity and perpetual belongingness. They were sealed with the Spirit “for the day of [final] redemption” (Eph. 4:30). By this act of sealing, the Spirit puts them all in one category and designates them as one group of people—*Christ’s* people group. Frederic Louis Godet, a nineteenth-century Swiss commentator, brings out with great clarity the social significance of this text when he says:

How different were both the religious condition (*Jews, Gentiles*) and the social condition (*bond, free*) of all those members of the Church of Corinth! By the same Spirit, into which they had all been baptized, they now find themselves fused, as it were, into one spiritual body, that is to say, into a society all whose members are moved by the same breath of life. When we think

of the distance which at that period separated Jews from Gentiles, slaves from freemen, we measure the power of the principle of union which had filled up those gulfs. All those [people] so diverse in their antecedents, when once they go forth regenerated from baptism, form thenceforth only *one new [person] in Christ*.¹²

When the church musters the courage to transcend its sociological identity and give precedence to its Christ-conferred identity, then and only then will it function as a sign of God's new humanity and a prefigurement of the cosmic reconciliation that God will ultimately bring about. John Howard Yoder puts it aptly: "The people of God are called to be today what the whole world is called to be ultimately."¹³

The reference to the Spirit's identifying role takes us logically into the doctrine of the church. According to Paul, those who belong to Christ do not remain in isolation but are brought together by the same Spirit to form the body of Christ, their common Lord and Master. In several of his epistles, Paul conveys that there is something unique about the

¹² Frederic Godet, *Commentary on First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 637 (emphasis his).

¹³ John Howard Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Public and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 28–29.

entity called “church.” In passages such as Galatians 3:28, 1 Corinthians 12:13, and Colossians 3:10, he declares in broad strokes that the church is an inclusive community where social differences and human distinctions lose their significance. For those who have been baptized into Christ and who have been clothed with him, “[t]here is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for all are one in Christ” (Gal. 3:26–28).

In Ephesians, however, these sweeping ecclesiological statements receive expansion and precision. In this short epistle, where ecclesiological thought reaches its highest points, Paul portrays the church as a unique society. He says several startling things about that brand new society. First of all, it is a society inhabited by a new humanity. Although it was part of God’s eternal plan (1:4—3:9), it was neither known nor brought into being until the fulfillment of Christ’s redemptive work on the cross (2:15; 3:6). It is a humanity that, due to its lofty status (4:24) and privileged relationship with God (1:22, 23; 3:10, 21), is different from what preceded it and is therefore urged to conduct itself differently from the old humanity (4:17ff.). The members of that one body are Jews and Gentiles who have become heirs together with Israel and share together in the promise in Jesus Christ (3:6).

Secondly, the new society is a reconciled community. It is a body consisting of formerly hostile and estranged groups. These were people who were kept apart by all sorts of segregation. The reconciliation that resulted from the cancellation of these alienating factors is the hallmark of the new society as well as its distinguishing characteristic. In Christ and through his blood, those who were once far away have been “brought near” to those who were considered close. By the same means, he reconciled the two formerly alienated groups to God and made them one united body. He did this by serving as an effective peacemaker who destroyed the barriers that kept them separate and who brought to death the hostility that nourished their resentment (Eph. 2:14–16). Kevin Giles says: “The concept of the church is thus, to use an early Christian expression, ‘a third race’ – or, as it was commonly called in Latin, a *tertium genus*, neither Jewish nor gentile.”¹⁴

Thirdly, the new society is an eschatological entity. It is the realm where God’s plan, which is focused on Christ, begins to receive fulfillment. In the church, the wisdom of God is made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (3:10). In Christ, believers participate here and now in the

¹⁴ Kevin Giles, *What on Earth Is the Church? An Exploration in New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 138.

blessings that belong to the world above and to the world to come. In the Christian community, then, the powers of the age to come are now being realized—though not in their fullness. The importance of this understanding of ecclesial identity for reconciliation within the church cannot be overstated. More and more, Christians in strife-torn areas of the world are finding in this ecclesiology a resource that helps to relativize the factors that fuel hostility in their context. In Africa, for instance, these considerations have led Chadian theologian Abel Ndjerareou to argue for the privileging of our Christ-centered identity over all others in the effort to combat tribal warfare. In his book *De Quelle Tribu Es-tu?*, Ndjerareou writes:

I encourage Christians individually and the church collectively to learn to live and privilege in their relationships, first, their new identity in Christ . . . then their identity (that flows) from being created in the image of God, and lastly, the respect for their specific tribal identities. To reverse this order is to create confusion and division with the new community of the people of God.¹⁵

¹⁵ Abel Ndjerareou, *De Quelle Tribu Es-Tu?* (Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire: Editions PBA, 2007), 8.

Conclusion and Appeal

This brief analysis of these cardinal doctrines should make abundantly clear that, properly understood, Christian faith has the resources necessary for overcoming the church's fragmentation problem. If these resources are deployed, we will be able to approximate the ideal depicted by John in his apocalyptic vision and to which we all pay lip service. If we were to do that, in many places our churches would cease being homogeneous communities; instead they would acquire a more heterogeneous character. And this is not only possible; it is feasible. At present, there are several attempts being made to concretize, however imperfectly, the vision of the church as a multiracial, multicultural, and multiclass body. In his book entitled *The New Conspirators*, Tom Sine observes that in various parts of the world one of the major ways of being the church today is what he terms the "Mosaic stream."¹⁶ This stream consists of a growing number of emerging congregations that recognize the lack of biblical support in the prevailing homogeneity and that thereby seek to rectify this by consciously endeavoring to be multicultural, multiracial, and

¹⁶ Tom Sine, *The New Conspirators: Creating the Future One Mustard Seed at a Time* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008), 44.

multiethnic. They see “diversity as essential to being church.”¹⁷

But as the experience of so many who have embraced the challenge to pursue this ideal shows, the realization of the biblical vision of a united and reconciled ecclesial community will require more than a cognitive grasp of the theological foundations on which it must necessarily be based. It necessitates the firm commitment and the herculean effort to flesh out these teachings in the daily life of the ecclesial community.¹⁸ In other words, the church must strive toward practical reconciliation. The reversal of age-old practices takes resolve and hard work. As Giles rightly points out, “The church is one; but in the realities of this world, unity is something for which the church must work.”¹⁹ The unity that is given must be actualized by “all in their corporate life.”²⁰

But to shrink from paying that price is to keep deferring the learning of a lesson that should have been learned about 2,000 years ago. At the very inception of the church, God made it clear that there should be no favoritism in his new society. Let me

¹⁷ Ibid., 45.

¹⁸ See Raleigh Washington and Glen Kehrein, *Breaking Down Walls: A Model for Reconciliation in an Age of Racial Strife* (Chicago: Moody, 1993).

¹⁹ Giles, *What on Earth*, 140.

²⁰ Ibid.

close with John Stott's trenchant comment on this bedrock principle:

The fundamental emphasis of the Cornelius story is that, since God does not make distinctions in his new society, we have no liberty to make them either. Yet, tragic as it is, the church has never learned irrevocably the truth of its own unity or of the equality of its members in Christ. . . . [T]he same ugly sin of discrimination has kept reappearing in the church in the form of racism (colour prejudice), nationalism ('my country, right or wrong'), tribalism in Africa and casteism in India, social and cultural snobbery, or sexism (discriminating against women). All such discrimination is inexcusable even in non-Christian society; in the Christian community it is both an obscenity (because offensive to human dignity) and a blasphemy (because offensive to God who accepts without discrimination all who repent and believe). Like Peter, we have to learn that 'God does not show favoritism.'²¹

The question remains: Will we, at last, learn that divinely taught and centuries-old lesson?

²¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church, and the World* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 1990), 197.

**MUTUAL LOVE AND CELEBRATION:
TOWARD A TRINITARIAN
THEOLOGY OF RACE RELATIONS
ON THE BASIS OF ASIAN AMERICAN
EXPERIENCE**

Sung Wook Chung

Introduction

The sin of racism has been prevalent throughout human history. Its negative effects have been felt and experienced universally beyond geographical and cultural boundaries. In the North American context, racism has been viewed as the “original sin” of the American nation. In particular, racial discrimination against African Americans has been one of the most dominant and embedded aspects of this sin.

But what about the Asian American experience of racism, especially in North America? It would be safe to say that the Asian American experience has not been as thorny and tragic as the African American one. It is important to appreciate that when Asians began to immigrate to America in the early nineteenth century as primarily contract workers, they were

relatively welcomed. Throughout that century, thousands of Chinese people came to the U.S. as construction workers and sugarcane laborers. In the late nineteenth century, other Asians including Japanese, Filipinos, and Koreans began to immigrate to America, and in the twentieth century, Vietnamese, Indians, and Muslims began to immigrate as well.

Most of the first-generation Asian immigrants remained low in their social status. However, many of the second- and third-generation Asian immigrants are now in socially middle or high class, and they have been assimilating into American society and culture relatively easily. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that many of the first-generation Asian immigrants experienced racial discrimination and that this has made a huge impact upon their psyche. Even the second- and third-generation Asian Americans might have experienced both implicit and explicit racism, which are systemically embedded in American culture and society. There are some sad things in this country's history. For example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (not rescinded until 1943) discriminated against Chinese people. The American government placed quotas on Asian populations later, and Japanese citizens were interned during World

War II. After the Vietnam War, immigrants and refugees were treated differently and unfairly.¹

In educational circles, Koreans have been criticized of being too insulated and not engaged with other immigrant groups and the broader culture. On the basis of these initial insights, then, I would like to explore a Trinitarian theology of race relations on the basis of Asian American experience. First of all, I will examine the revival of the doctrine of the Trinity and the renaissance of Trinitarian theology in the late twentieth century. Secondly, I will explore the shape of Trinitarian spirituality, which we as Christians should pursue and embody in the Christian life. Third, I will explore implications of Trinitarian theology and spirituality for race relations.

Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Race Relations:

Insights from Trinitarian Theology

I am convinced that Trinitarian theology can shed significant and further light upon a theology of race relations. When the Christian is equipped with the insights of Trinitarian theology, he or she can lead a life of mutual love and celebration on a deeper level with the power of the Holy Spirit.

¹ These examples were introduced to me by Danny Carroll, my former colleague at Denver Seminary.

The Renaissance of Trinitarian Theology in the Late Twentieth Century

As is already well known, Christian theology experienced a renaissance and revival of the doctrine of the Trinity on a global scale in the late twentieth century.² Karl Barth, Thomas F. Torrance, Colin Gunton, and Jürgen Moltmann from the Reformed tradition, as well as John Zizioulas³ from the Greek Orthodox tradition, are some of the most important theologians who made an indelible contribution to this revival. Among Lutheran contributors are Robert W. Jenson, Carl E. Braaten, and Wolfhart Pannenberg. Roman Catholicism has also been witnessing a renaissance of the doctrine, primarily through the contribution of feminist theologians

² For excellent introductions, see Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004); idem, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001). See also Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007); and Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004).

³ John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997); idem, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. Paul McPartlan (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

Elizabeth Johnson⁴ and Catherine Mowry Lacugna.⁵
In the Evangelical tradition, Stanley Grenz and
Millard Erickson have made considerable
contributions as well.

***Major Theological Insights from the Revival of
Trinitarian Theology***

We can glean four major theological insights from the
revival of the doctrine of the Trinity in the late
twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Unity and Diversity. The doctrine of the Trinity
teaches that the God we worship, serve, and love
embodies both unity and diversity. In other words, the
biblical teaching that God is one means that the triune
God whom the Bible reveals is the only true God.
Therefore, there is only one God. The doctrine of the
Trinity is consistent with the mathematical oneness of
God, which both the Old and New Testaments
repeatedly emphasize.

However, this only true God is not like Allah of
Islam. Allah is a god who has only one person.
Rather, the God of the Bible embodies diversity in
three divine persons. These three divine persons

⁴ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in
Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 2002).

⁵ Catherine Mowry Lacugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and
Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

enjoy a free, voluntary, and mutual relationship. In this relationship, the three divine persons maintain oneness and unity. In this sense, God is a community or, more technically speaking, a communion of three divine persons who embody unity in diversity and diversity in unity.

So diversity is not contradictory to unity; unity is not contradictory to diversity. Unity and diversity can co-exist in perfect harmony. They are not mutually exclusive, so to speak. In a sense, the doctrine of the Trinity is a resolution to the perennial philosophical problem of “the one and the many.” The triune God embodies both unity and plurality in absolute balance. The notion that the God who embodies the diversity of three persons simultaneously maintains oneness and unity implies that diversity should not degenerate into disorderly pluralism, irreconcilable division, or mutual exclusivism. Diversity should be harmonized with unity. At the same time, unity in God does not imply uniformity, which suppresses and suffocates diversity, but rather oneness harmonized with diversity.

Relationship among the Three Divine Persons.

Second, the doctrine of the Trinity teaches that the one God we serve, love, and worship exists in the mutual relationship of freedom and spontaneity. Accepting the theological insights of the Cappadocian

Fathers, Christian orthodox theology has employed the word *perichoresis* to describe the mutual relationship between the three divine persons. *Perichoresis* means mutual indwelling, mutual incoherence, and circumincession. This signifies that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as distinct persons are not three separate Gods, but that they exist in perichoretic unity. The Father dwells in the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Son dwells in the Father and the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit dwells in the Father and the Son. The three divine persons are distinct but not separate from one another. Divine *perichoresis* entails, further, that the three divine persons penetrate into, participate in, and depend on one another. Mutual penetration, participation, and interdependence characterize the life of the triune God.

***Koinonia* among the Three Persons.** Third, according to Trinitarian theology, there is a *koinonia* among the three divine persons. In this context, it is very important to understand *koinonia* properly. The Greek word *koinonia* is translated “fellowship” and “communion” in English. For example, the Greek word translated “fellowship” in 2 Corinthians 13:14 is *koinonia*. What, then, are the characteristics of the *koinonia* of the triune God?

The triune God is a communion of persons who enjoy the *koinonia* of mutual love (*agape*), mutual glorification, mutual welcoming, mutual embrace, mutual respect, mutual hospitality, mutual service (*diakonia*), and mutual submission (*hupotasso*). The Trinity is not just an egalitarian community of entities that seeks to grasp equal rights; rather, it is a communion of submission (*hupotasso*) in which the three persons can set aside their rights for equality (*kenosis*) and serve one another with self-sacrificing love (*agape*).

God and Communion. Fourth, today's Trinitarian theologians argue that God is like a community or a society, an argument associated with the so-called "social Trinity" program. In particular, Leonardo Boff, a Latin American liberation theologian, highlighted this aspect of Trinitarian theology by entitling his book *Trinity and Society*. There is some truth in this observation. But I personally prefer the term *communal Trinity*, since the words *community* and *society* are deficient in fully expressing biblical revelation on the matter. This is because the three divine persons of the Trinity go beyond a community or society composed of separate individual entities. Rather, they form a perfect union and unity through their manner of mutual indwelling, penetration, and participation. In that sense, God is not a community

but rather a communion or a communal fellowship. This means that God's mode of existence is like a communal fellowship of unity between the three divine persons.

Contributions of Trinitarian Spirituality

The essence of Christian spirituality is Trinitarian because Christian spirituality must be a spirituality of loving, imitating, and being oriented toward the triune God. It is important to appreciate in this context that Trinitarian spirituality is a spirituality that we as Christians should pursue and embody in our relationship with God. However, it is even more crucial to understand that Trinitarian spirituality is already embodied and materialized in the mutual relationship of the three divine persons. In other words, the spirituality that we should pursue and embody is the spirituality that the triune God embodies intrinsically, immanently, and ontologically. This means that Trinitarian spirituality is already embodied in the eternal communion of the triune God before it is materialized in our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationships with others.

What, then, are the core characteristics of Trinitarian spirituality?

Respect and Celebration of Diversity

The first core characteristic of Trinitarian spirituality is respect for and celebration of diversity. In this context, the word *diversity* signifies that mutually distinct and different entities exist together. In that sense, diversity is an ontological principle of the triune God. The Father is not the Son; the Son is not the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit is not the Father. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are different persons distinct from one another. In other words, our God is not the God of uniformity. The God who has created and is governing the universe embodies diversity in the very essence of his being.

Moreover, diversity is not only God's ontological principle but also a principle of creation. The Genesis accounts of creation tell us that God created all things in accordance with the principle of diversity. The repeated phrase *according to their kinds* implies that God created all things according to the principle of diversity. After creating everything "according to their kinds," "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).⁶ This teaches the significant truth that God declared every creature to be good. Furthermore, as the principle of creation, diversity is good as well. In other words, diversity is

⁶ All biblical quotations in this paper come from the NIV 2011.

good because it is an ontological principle of God as well as a principle of creation. God never imposed or forced uniformity upon creatures. Rather, God created everything “according to their kinds” and respected their diversity. By declaring “it is very good,” God celebrated their diversity.

Here, we encounter the fundamental insight that Trinitarian spirituality offers. It is that we should respect and celebrate people and entities different from us. It is that we should accept the other with open hearts. We should realize that it is not a curse but a blessing worthy of celebration, a celebration of the fact that people different from us are with us. The triune God who respects diversity puts the other beside us.

Emmanuel Levinas, the twentieth-century French and Jewish philosopher, developed the “philosophy of the other.” He argued that every human tragedy begins when we attempt to make the other like ourselves, suppressing his or her uniqueness. He also contended that for human beings to establish their identity and meaning as human beings, they should accept the other, different from themselves, as the absolute being. This means that by letting the other be the other, human beings can discover their identity and can become ethical persons in a true and genuine sense. According to Levinas, when human beings look to the face of the other, they can discover

themselves as well as God. Levinas was not a Christian, but it is undeniable that he saw an aspect of the truth. He realized that it is extremely important to accept, respect, and celebrate the other as God's blessing.

The three divine persons of the triune God lead a similar life. The Father respects and celebrates the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son respects and celebrates the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit respects and celebrates the Father and the Son. Moreover, the three divine persons welcome and are pleased with one another. It is never a possibility that mutual ignorance, dismissal, cursing, or condemnation invade the *koinonia* of these three divine persons. Trinitarian spirituality asks us to respect and celebrate diversity. Trinitarian spirituality teaches us that we should respect, celebrate, and welcome the other who is before and beside us. Human beings can establish their self-identity and become true human beings only in right relationship with the other. In short, there is no *I* or *we* without the other.

Numerous tragedies in the world today occur because human beings do not respect, accept, embrace, and celebrate the other. Sinful human beings have a natural inclination to reject and exploit the difference of the other. Because white people could not accept and embrace the otherness of black

people, they enslaved and discriminated them. This tragedy of racism has given birth to numerous traumas, deaths, and sacrifices and will disappear only when whites and blacks embody Trinitarian spirituality by blessing, respecting, and celebrating one another.

Sadly, however, nobody can embody Trinitarian spirituality perfectly in the current sinful world. So we eagerly expect the kingdom of God to be consummated. That kingdom has already come in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and we as Christians have already entered into it. We are enjoying, albeit partially, the righteousness, peace, and joy of the kingdom of God. Moreover, we are partially embodying Trinitarian spirituality. However, although the kingdom has already come, it has not yet been consummated. When the kingdom of God is consummated, Trinitarian spirituality will be materialized perfectly in our lives.

Even though Trinitarian spirituality will only be perfectly realized in the future, we should pursue and strive to embody Trinitarian spirituality here and now. That is a life that follows the exhortation of the apostle Paul in Philippians 3:12–14:

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of

me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Pursuit of Unity in the Context of Diversity

The second core characteristic of Trinitarian spirituality is the pursuit of unity in the context of diversity. It is pursuing unity and communion in the context of respect and celebration of diversity. The three divine persons of the triune God maintain a way of life that embraces, respects, celebrates, welcomes, and loves one another. The triune God embodies the diversity of the three distinct persons. However, diversity in the triune God never yields to destructive and disorderly division and conflict. Rather, the three divine persons perfectly maintain unity and oneness in the context of diversity. Diversity and unity are not mutually contradictory but are rather harmonized beautifully. However, numerous tragedies in this world begin to occur when diversity degenerates into division and conflict.

Trinitarian spirituality respects and celebrates diversity. However, in the name of respecting and celebrating diversity, we must not ignore unity. Disorderly division and conflict will necessarily bring

about destruction and death. Trinitarian spirituality promotes and cherishes the harmony and balance of diversity and unity. In the name of diversity, we must not ignore unity; in the name of unity, we must not suppress diversity.

Sin has brought about separation, division, and disorder. The fall of Adam and Eve broke their relationship with the triune God. Furthermore, it broke their relationship with themselves. As a result, they came to feel ashamed of themselves. Sin also broke their relationship with the natural order. Nature began to rebel against human beings. Harmonious and peaceful relationships among creatures were also broken. Therefore, restoration of these relationships on the basis of Trinitarian spirituality will bring healing to the division and disorder brought about by sin. When we pursue and embody Trinitarian spirituality, we can experience the life of unity and harmony in a genuine sense.

Perichoretic Relationship

The third core characteristic of Trinitarian spirituality is the perichoretic relationship within the Godhead. As mentioned earlier, the Greek word *perichoresis* means mutual indwelling. The three divine persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit dwell in one another. The Father dwells in the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son dwells in the Father and the Holy

Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in the Father and the Son. Here the word *indwelling* can be thought of in terms of *penetration*. The three divine persons penetrate one another. It can also be thought of in terms of *participation*. The Father participates in the life of the Son and the Holy Spirit and vice versa. The mutually indwelling or perichoretic relationship among the three divine persons implies that each person of the Trinity does not exist in separation or independence of the others. In other words, the existence and life of each person depends on the existence and life of other persons. The three divine persons of the triune God exist and live in an interdependent relationship with one another.

The perichoretic relationship in the triune God is very significant. It criticizes radically the ideology of human autonomy and independence that modernity has been emphasizing ever since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. In other words, the individualistic way of life, which overemphasizes the sufficiency, independence, and autonomy of an individual, is squarely opposed to the mode of existence and life of the triune God. Individualism, which pursues the happiness of an individual while ignoring the existence and life of the other, is not consistent with the way of existence and life of the triune God. On the other hand, collectivism, which pursues the security and happiness of a group while

ignoring differences and diversity among individuals, is not consistent with God's mode of existence either. The perichoretic relationship in the triune God teaches us that our existence and life are dependent upon the existence and life of the other. We should realize that a life lived in right relationship with the other, characterized by mutual dependence, is consistent with the mode of life of the triune God.

Koinonia of Love and Diakonia

The fourth core feature of Trinitarian spirituality is that the relationship of mutual indwelling and dependence is upheld by a *koinonia* of love and *diakonia*. The Father loves the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son loves the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit loves the Father and the Son. This *koinonia* of love is eternal fellowship and is expressed in a life of mutual service and glorification. The Father serves and glorifies the Son and the Spirit; the Son serves and glorifies the Father and the Spirit; and the Spirit serves and glorifies the Father and the Son. The three divine persons love one another, glorify one another, respect one another, submit to one another, serve one another, and witness to one another. They exist in an extremely beautiful fellowship and *koinonia*. In other words, these three divine persons form a communion of mutual love and service.

The essence of Trinitarian spirituality is the fellowship of love in which diverse people respect, celebrate, welcome, and glorify one another. It is a *koinonia* full of love. This *koinonia* of love is also extended into the life of *diakonia*, of mutual service and submission. To love one another never means exploiting and abusing others in the name of love. The genuine relationship of love is characterized by mutual submission, reciprocal service, and sacrificial love.

Implications of Trinitarian Theology and Spirituality for Race Relations

In light of this brief exploration into Trinitarian theology and spirituality, a number of implications can be highlighted. First, we are called to imitate God (Eph. 5:1). This means that we need to strive to celebrate and respect diversity and difference rather than dismiss and suppress them. In the context of celebrating diversity, we should pursue unity. In the context of endeavoring to materialize unity, we should respect diversity and difference.

When we apply this principle to race relations, we can eliminate the root of racism. We need to celebrate and respect racial diversity and differences rather than dismiss and suppress them. We should learn how to appreciate racial diversity as a reflection

of the intrinsic and archetypal diversity in God, the diversity of the three divine persons.

Second, in the context of celebrating diversity, we should pursue a perichoretic relationship with others, characterized by mutual openness, participation, and interdependence. Therefore, extreme individualism, which outright dismisses the communal dimension of human life, squarely contradicts the way of being that is characteristic of the triune God. Furthermore, extreme collectivism, which suffocates the celebration of diversity and individuality, is opposed to the perichoretic manner of God's existence. Rejecting both uncontrolled individualism and oppressive collectivism, we should strive to embody a communal *perichoresis*.

Third, we should strive to embody communions like the triune communion in every area of human life, including family, the work place, school, society, politics, and national and international relations. The kingdom of the triune God has already come. It has already begun to impact individual human beings and their communities. Churches are communities called to realize a communion like the triune communion. Of course, before the eschaton, we will not be able to accomplish our task completely, but churches can still

be signposts for the coming kingdom of the triune God—who is a perfect communion.⁷

Finally, Jesus Christ gave us a new command: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34). Why did Jesus command us to love one another? Why is it a new command? I suspect it is because the three divine persons of the triune God love one another from eternity to eternity. In other words, loving one another is God’s eternal act. For this reason, by commanding us to love one another, Jesus Christ our Lord has asked us to imitate the triune God. Therefore, it is imperative for us to love one another. White people must love blacks; blacks must love whites. Asians must love the white and the black alike. And whites and blacks must love Asians. With the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we must love people of different skin color. That is the way of life that we as Christ’s disciples must choose.

⁷ For an excellent application of Trinitarian theology to daily life, see Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

RACE: CAN WE EVER GET IT RIGHT?

Carl F. Ellis, Jr.

In any discussion of race, our view of humanity is key. The Bible puts forth the loftiest view of humanity, namely, that we are made in the image of God (*imago Dei*). Yet the Bible also puts forth the most realistic view of humanity, namely, radical depravity. We are flawed at the very root and this permeates everything we do. However, because of God's grace we are not utterly depraved. Humans are still capable of doing good things, such as performing acts of kindness, composing beautiful music, and producing beautiful art. A truly biblical worldview requires us to affirm the “lofty” and “realistic” views of humanity and their implications simultaneously at 100 percent.

Any weakness in our view of the lofty *imago Dei* leads to dehumanization—whether we dehumanize ourselves with restrictive definitions based on anything less than God or dehumanize others by various types of prejudice. On the other hand, any weakness in our view of human depravity leads to tyranny. We end up with a naivety regarding fallen

human nature. We put our faith in people, not realizing that “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” In this way we end up with tyrants as leaders.

Dysfunctional Human Relationships

At creation, man and woman were made in the image of God individually and relationally. Through intimacy, they had the privilege of experiencing the kind of oneness only known by God. They also had the privilege of reenacting their own creation through procreation. When they came together in intercourse to have children, in essence they were saying, “Let us make man in our own image and likeness.” And so it was; the child was made in the image of both of them.

Generally speaking, both male and female are made in the image of God. The distinction was made in terms of *dominion*, not *dominance*. The man got the image directly because God made him from dust. The woman got the image in a derivative way because God made her from man.

The fall of humankind happened when we broke the covenant of creation that God established with us. At the heart of the covenant were the *terms* (the roles the parties were to play in relationship with each other) and the *sanctions* (the blessings for keeping the terms and the curses for breaking them). Essentially, we broke the covenant of creation by rejecting the

word of God as the basis of life and as the basis of the knowledge of good and evil. Instead of discerning good from evil by God's word, we sinned by choosing to make this determination based on human opinion. This was a classic example of *creaturism*, whereby the creature judges everything, including the Creator, by creaturely standards. This sin threw the whole creation into abnormality. We also rejected our freedom in order to have access to the forbidden fruit. "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge [determination] of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die" (Gen. 2:16–17).¹ The continuation of eternal life was the blessing and eternal death was the curse. In this instance, eternal death meant immediate banishment to the lake of fire and a loss of our freedom.

In the fall of humanity, the image of God was defaced but not obliterated. Fallen humanity, being both in the image of God and sinning, shows sin to be a grave matter. If humanity is not in the image of God, then sin is not significant. The higher view of humanity in God's image, the more exacerbated is our depravity. The image of God makes no distinction between gender, race, or rank.

¹ All quotations of Scripture in this essay are from the NIV 2011.

Instead of immediately sending us to the lake of fire, God showed us grace. He gave us another covenant, the covenant of salvation, designed to deliver us from the curse of the covenant of creation. Because humans are still in the image of God, we are still capable of receiving restoration and reconciliation with God. However, because humans are depraved, we are totally unable to restore ourselves to God. In our fallen human nature, we are totally dependent on God.

The fall of humankind was the origin of dysfunctional human relationships—the basis for dehumanization. Until salvation is fully applied, we will experience many effects of the fall. One effect is that, apart from God's grace, we have a lack of freedom and power to choose good over evil. Another effect shows up as *human power differentials*. These power differentials lead to *human power struggles* because power corrupts in a depraved world.

Observations on Power

God is all powerful, yet there are no power struggles between the persons of the Godhead. Why? Because the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one. Because they exist as one, power is not an issue.

Before the fall, Adam and Eve had significant power and dominion, yet there were no power struggles between them. Why? Because they were

one and their oneness was like God's oneness, only on a human level. Adam was the head, but he was the first among equals.

After the fall, their oneness was broken and they began to think and act only as individuals. This led to self-centeredness. When confronted by God, Adam blamed Eve directly and God indirectly, and Eve blamed the serpent directly and God indirectly (Gen. 3:12). They began to seek dominance over one another and inequality was a result.

The first manifestation of a power struggle was seen in the marriage relationship. God said to Eve, "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). The word *desire* here was not about romance, but about seeking dominance—leading to power struggles.

Power struggles eventually infected all human relationships. Thus, human inequality became universal, between individuals (e.g., Cain and Abel) and groups (e.g., ethnic groups) alike. As human relationships continued to degenerate, other effects of the fall were manifested, namely, persecution. We see this in the struggle between the "seed of the woman" and the "seed of the serpent." God said to the serpent:

"And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;

he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel” (Gen. 3:15).

Individually, the “seed of the woman” refers to the coming Savior and the “seed of the serpent” refers to Satan himself. Collectively, the “seed of the woman” refers to God’s covenant people and the “seed of the serpent” refers to the enemies of God and his people. God’s enemies will persecute and seek to destroy his people, and their heel will be struck. However, God’s people will successfully resist this persecution. They will have a disadvantage on a human level, yet by God’s power they will persevere and ultimately prevail over God’s enemies. The enemy’s head will be crushed. However, this struggle will be painful. Persecution has become a significant manifestation of human power struggles between all people groups in general.

Dysfunctional human relationships are caused by the ongoing effects of sin, that is to say, abnormality. Not only are there natural and apparently random effects (e.g., storms, earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, wild fires, etc.) but also the direct results of sin (e.g., impiety and oppression). Impiety is sinning and suffering our own consequences—e.g., carelessness, laziness, recklessness, etc. Oppression is sinning and forcing others to suffer the consequences and/or imposing our sin on others.

Observations on Oppression

Oppression is sin plus power. Therefore, oppression is driven by power struggles. One effect that oppression has on its victims is the increasing of their proportion of bad options and the decreasing of their proportion of good options. For example, if we all had ten options in life, the non-oppressed among us would have eight good options and two bad ones, while the oppressed would have eight bad options and two good ones. In this case, the situation of the oppressed would be exacerbated by the greater likelihood of making bad choices.

The foundation of oppression is creaturism. If, for example, you are the standard of judgment, then everyone else is inferior by definition because no one else can be you quite as well as you. Creaturism has many applications, among them:

- *me-ism*—judging others by the standard of myself
- *cultural imperialism*—judging other cultures by the standard of my culture
- *sexism*—judging the other gender by the standard of my gender
- *racism*—judging other races by the standard of my race
- *ethnocentrism*—judging other people groups by the standard of my people group

Israel, for one, was plagued by ethnocentrism. God had repeatedly shown his people that they were included in the covenant community *because they were chosen*. But they mistakenly assumed they were chosen *because they were Jews*. Thus, they assumed they would always have the status of the dominant culture in God's kingdom. They did not tolerate anything that would contradict this notion. Two occasions in the book of Acts illustrate this mentality.

First Occasion: Paul and His Companions in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:14b–48)

On the Sabbath [Paul and his companions] entered the synagogue and sat down. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak.”

Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: “Fellow Israelites and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me!” (vv. 14b–16)

Paul proceeded to deliver a message that broke with time-honored Jewish theological tradition. After

retelling Israel's history from Egypt to King David (vv. 17–22), his argument can be captured as follows:

- From David came Jesus the Savior; Jesus is greater than the greatest prophet—John the Baptist (vv. 23–25).
- Jerusalem failed to recognize Jesus and condemned him to death, yet this fulfilled the Scriptures and God raised Jesus from the dead (vv. 26–31).
- The resurrection of Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures; Jesus is greater than King David (vv. 32–37).
- Forgiveness of sin and justification cannot come through works of the law of Moses, only through faith in Jesus (vv. 38–39).

Paul concludes:

“Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you:

‘Look, you scoffers,
wonder and perish,
for I am going to do something in your days
that you would never believe,
even if someone told you” (vv. 40–41;
cf. Hab. 1:5).

Given the controversy surrounding the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, this message should have provoked a violent reaction. But it did not. “As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath” (v. 42). The controversy flared up when the Jews grasped the implications of Paul’s message. “On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him” (vv. 44–45). The universal appeal of the gospel message was a threat to the Jewish assumption of dominance in the kingdom of God.

***Second Occasion: Paul on His Visit to Jerusalem
(Acts 21:27—22:24)***

On this occasion, Paul was spotted, seized, and accused of teaching against Israel and the law and defiling the temple by bringing Greeks in to it. Paul was dragged out of the temple and almost killed by mob violence, but the commander of the Roman troops saved Paul’s life by taking him into custody. Paul was able to get permission to address the crowd.

As in the previous example, Paul delivered a message that broke with time-honored Jewish tradition. Here is a summary and outline of 22:1–20:

- Paul introduces himself as a Jew: born and raised in Tarsus, taught by Gamaliel, a persecutor of the church in his zeal for God (vv. 1–5).
- He then describes his dramatic conversion on the Damascus road (vv. 6–13).
- He recounts how Ananias informed him that he was chosen to be a witness of Jesus Christ, how he eventually returned to Jerusalem, and how Jesus appeared to him, saying, “Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me” (vv. 14–18).
- Paul retorts by appealing to the witnesses of his persecution. “‘Lord,’ I replied, ‘these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him’” (vv. 19–20).

Then came the threat to the audience’s sense of dominance. When Paul declares, “Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles’” (v. 21), the text tells us that the crowd immediately stopped listening and then “raised their voices and

shouted, ‘Rid the earth of him! He’s not fit to live!’” (v. 22). The violence was so intense, in fact, that Paul had to be rescued by Roman soldiers (vv. 23–24).

Observations on Marginalization

One result of dominance is oppression, which leads to *marginalization*. It happens when something or someone is relegated to a position of insignificance, devalued importance, minor influence, and/or diminished power. Every society has a dominant culture and at least one subdominant culture. Each of these has a corresponding cultural agenda and an intracultural consciousness. All in the subdominant culture are exposed to the dominant cultural agenda. Few in the dominant culture are even aware that there is a subdominant cultural agenda. Therefore, the concerns of the subdominant culture tend to be marginalized. Marginalization has four dimensions:

- *relational*—face-to-face marginalization
- *systemic*—marginalization by way of time-honored conventions and protocols
- *by design*—intentional marginalization resulting from subjugation
- *by default*—marginalization resulting from a lack of power or a *perceived* lack of power

Pairing these dimensions reveals four manifestations, illustrated by the Window of Marginalization (figure 1).² The top two panes of the window are *relational*; the bottom two panes, *systemic*; the left two panes, marginalization *by design*; the right two, marginalization *by default*. Thus the four manifestations of marginalization are: *relational by design*, *relational by default*, *systemic by design*, and *systemic by default*.

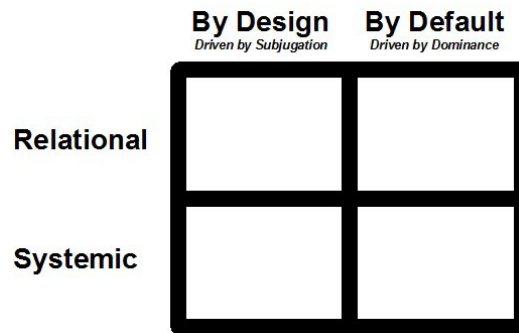


Figure 1. The Window of Marginalization

Every subdominant culture has a distinct paradigm for marginalization. The African American experience, for example, has largely been a struggle

² Carl F. Ellis, Jr., "The Sovereignty of God and Ethnic-Based Suffering," in *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God*, ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 123–41.

against racism or the effects of racism. Therefore, racism is regarded as the paradigm for all marginalization. Ultimately, marginalization does *not* require a racist motive. However, from an African American perspective, marginalization is assumed to have a racist motive. This hinders cross-cultural communication because Anglo-Americans tend to view African American protests against marginalization as “playing the race card” and African Americans tend to view Anglo-American protests against the label of “racism” as “being in denial.”

Camara Phyllis Jones identifies three levels of racism (a paradigm of oppression and/or marginalization): *institutionalized*, *personally mediated*, and *internalized*.³

Oppression, whether institutionalized or personally mediated, is primarily imposed from outside the oppressed community. Truly, these have a devastating effect; but internalized oppression is even more devastating. This kind of oppression results when the oppressed accept their oppressors as their standard of judgment and, subsequently, believe that the resulting definitions of inferiority apply to them.

³ Camara Phyllis Jones, “Levels of Racism: A Theoretical Framework and a Gardener’s Tale,” *American Journal of Public Health* 90, no. 8 (2000): 1212–15.

Jones brilliantly illustrates this phenomenon by telling a gardening story. She bought a house in a major city and on the front porch were two flower boxes. One already had dirt in it and the other was empty. She did not realize the existing soil was poor and rocky. Because she wanted to plant flowers in both boxes, she filled the empty box with rich potting soil and planted six flower seeds in each box. The growth of the flowers in the boxes showed her how oppression and racism both develop and function. To illustrate her point, Jones supposed the following.

- A gardener decided to plant flowers yielding red blossoms in one box and flowers yielding pink blossoms in the other.
- She knows which box has the rich potting soil and which has the poor soil.
- She will not plant red blossom flowers and pink blossom flowers in the same box.
- The gardener prefers red blossoms over pink.

In this scenario, the gardener would plant seeds for red blossoms in the rich soil and seeds for pink blossoms in the poor soil. All six seeds sprout in the rich soil. The strongest three seeds grew tall. The weaker seeds grew to middling height. In the poor soil, only the strongest seeds grew, but only to middling height (figure 2).

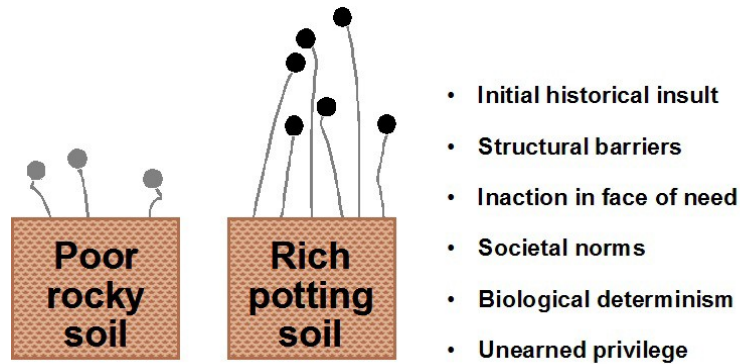


Figure 2. Institutionalized Racism

This is how she illustrates institutionalized racism. It starts with what she calls an *initial historical insult*—the decision was made to plant the red flowers in the better soil. It is carried on by *structural barriers*—the two boxes separate the two soils. It involves *inaction in the face of need*—the poor, rocky soil needs fertilizer, but it doesn't matter because "they are just pink flowers anyway." It reflects *societal norms*. Everybody knows that if you have sick plants, you don't waste your time on them. Your best efforts should be directed at the best plants. Institutionalized racism also involves *biological determinism*—the red blossoms are considered superior to the pink blossoms. Finally, it involves

unearned privilege—the red flower seeds are planted in the good soil, but they did not earn this privilege.

Jones illustrates personally mediated racism in the following way. The weak pink blossoms and the strong red ones are about to produce pollen. However, the gardener does not want good, strong plants to be pollinated by obviously weak, inferior ones. So the gardener will pluck the pink blossoms off before they can pollinate. As a result, the weak plants will wither and die (figure 3). This is equivalent to relational marginalization by design.

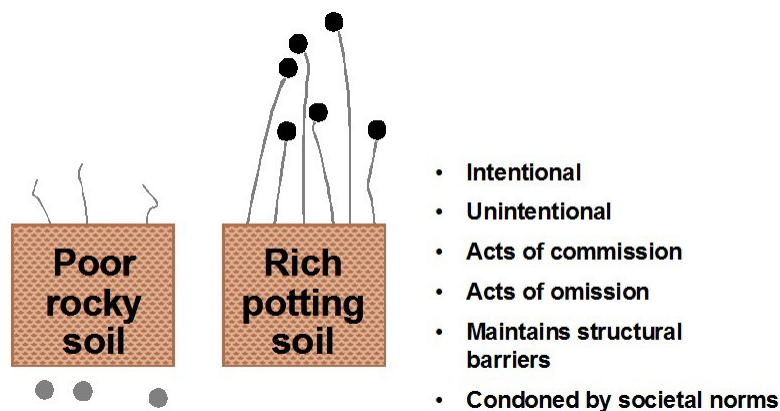


Figure 3. Personally Mediated Racism

Thus, personally mediated racism is both intentional and unintentional. It involves acts of commission and acts of omission. It maintains the

structural barriers—the two different boxes—and is also condoned by societal norms. After all, everybody knows you pluck the weak blossoms off before they can pollinate.

The third level is the most devastating—internalized racism. In this situation, the pink blossoms themselves begin to believe that red pollen is superior. When people are marginalized long enough, when people are under the yoke of oppression long enough, they begin to believe in their own inferiority. This is what makes internalized racism so tragic.

Suppose a bee carrying pollen was to land on one of the pink blossoms. What kind of pollen would it prefer? Pink or red? It would say, “Stop! I prefer red pollen. I don’t want any of that inferior pink pollen!” Why this response? Because it believes in its own inferiority (figure 4). The pain of ethnic-based marginalization is bad enough. It is devastating when the oppressed begin to think of themselves as inferior, not deserving of respect.

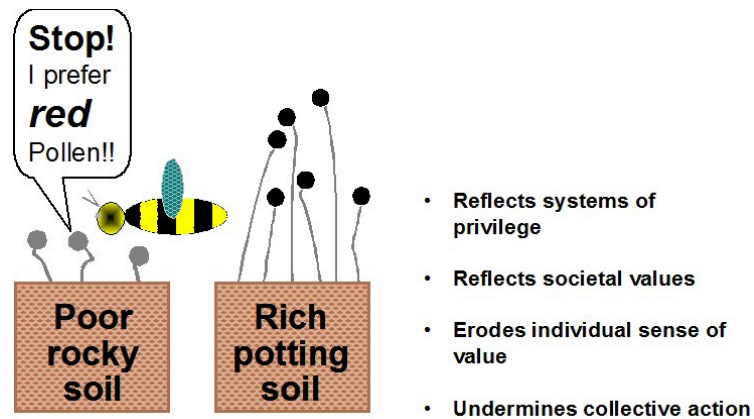


Figure 4. Internalized Racism

Thus, internalized racism reflects systems of privileges and societal values. It erodes the individual sense of value and undermines collective action. The pink flowers are so convinced that they are inferior that they begin to despise each other. Pink-on-pink crime becomes a problem.⁴

⁴ This illustration is also cited in Ellis, "Sovereignty of God," 131–34.

The Devastation of Internalized Oppression

There are two good, biblical examples of this phenomenon. Both happened while the Hebrews were under the yoke of Egyptian slavery.

First Example: Exodus 2:1–14

Moses, a Hebrew, was born in Goshen (“the hood”) but grew up in Pharaoh’s palace (“the big house”). Contrary to the depiction of Cecil B. deMille in his movie *The Ten Commandments*, the biblical text indicates that Moses’ adoptive Egyptian mother never hid his true identity from him. The Hebrews in Goshen, evidently, were aware of Moses’ identity as well.

One day, after he had grown up, Moses decided to go to the hood and hang out with his people. He saw a fellow Hebrew being brutally beaten by an Egyptian. Moses intervened and killed the Egyptian in the struggle.

He returned to the hood the next day and saw two Hebrews fighting. He said to the one in the wrong, “Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?” The man replied, “Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?” (Exod. 2:13–14a).

Without understanding internalized oppression, we will miss a subtle insight that God shows us. After

four hundred years of slavery and humiliation, the Hebrews were believing in their own inferiority. Thus, they had contempt for themselves. If Moses was an Egyptian, he would have been respected. But because the man in the wrong knew Moses was Hebrew, he totally disrespected him. He asked, “Are you thinking of killing me as you killed *the* Egyptian?” Notice he didn’t say, “*your fellow* Egyptian.” The message, in other words, was: “Who do you think you are?! You’re still a Hebrew!” In those days *Hebrew* was a derogatory term, not unlike the N-word for African Americans or the W-word for Italian Americans today.

Second Example: Exodus 32:1–6

When God appeared to Moses on Mt. Sinai, he told him to go to Pharaoh and say, “The LORD, *the God of the Hebrews*, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God” (Exod. 3:18; emphasis mine). One of the reasons the children of Israel complained and murmured against God was because he identified with them. In their minds, any god who would identify with the Hebrews had to be inferior. Thus, when Moses delayed from returning from the mountain top, the Hebrews quickly decided to make an idol in the image of an Egyptian god (32:1–6).

This phenomenon can be called *the “Egyptian’s ice is colder” syndrome*. In Goshen, if an Egyptian and a Hebrew had ice stands next to each other, the Hebrews would buy ice from the Egyptian because his ice was perceived as colder, even though they had the same ice supplier. Why? Because the Hebrews saw themselves as inferior, and anything a Hebrew had to offer was seen as inferior.

Our Response to Dysfunctional Human Relationships

According to Cornelius Van Til, we are called both to restrain sin and to destroy its consequences in this world as much as is possible.

It is our duty not only to seek to destroy evil in ourselves and in our fellow Christians, but it is our further duty to seek to destroy evil in all our fellow men. It may be, humanly speaking, hopeless in some instances that we should succeed in bringing them to Christ. This does not absolve us, however, from seeking to restrain their sins to some extent for this life. We must be active first of all in the field of special grace, but we also have a task to perform with respect to the destruction of evil in the field of common grace.

Still further we must note that our task with respect to the destruction of evil is not done if we

have sought to fight sin itself everywhere we see it. We have the further obligation to destroy the consequences of sin in this world as far as we can. We must do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith. To help relieve something of the sufferings of the creatures of God is our privilege and our task.⁵

This means, among other things, minimizing the dominant/subdominant dynamics in human relationships in general and within the body of Christ in particular (James 2:1–4). It also means being sensitive to the core cultural concerns of the subdominant people groups in our societies. Core concerns of the dominant culture tend to revolve around preservation of the status quo, while core concerns of the subdominant culture tend to revolve around empowerment and change.

We in the body of Christ will be light-years ahead of the world if we can learn to deal with ethnic marginalization on the level of both human power struggles and dominant/sub-dominant dynamics. This is a key means of glorifying God. But perhaps the reason why we don't do this is because we have lost the doxological dimension of spirituality. It is time

⁵ Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Theistic Ethics*, vol. 3, *In Defense of the Faith* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1977), 87.

for a new reformation to rediscover practical spirituality.

What should distinguish the body of Christ today is gratitude to God for his saving grace. This gratitude should be characterized by two expressions: *faith*—our response of trusting Christ and his saving grace; and *works*—the resulting demonstration of our faith and our thanksgiving to Christ for his saving grace. These two expressions of gratitude, further, should be empowered by two motivations: a *salvific* motivation for faith—a strong, ongoing desire to grow in our knowledge and experience of God’s salvation; and a *doxological* motivation for works—a strong, ongoing desire to show the excellence of God’s glory.

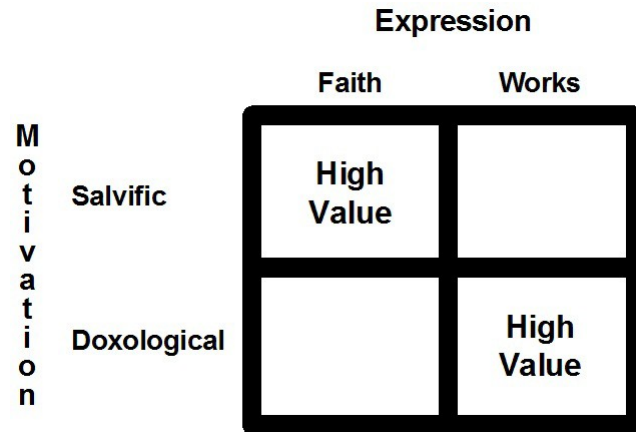


Figure 5. The Window of Practical Spirituality

The relationship between these dimensions can be seen in the Window of Practical Spirituality (figure 5). When our motivation is salvific, faith has high value; when our motivation is doxological, works have high value. This is why Jesus said, “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your *good deeds* and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:16). This is a doxological statement.

We do faith fairly well, but we don’t do works well at all. Why? Because *we have lost the doxological motivation in spirituality*. Perhaps it is time for a new reformation. While the first Reformation rediscovered the salvific dimension, the new reformation could rediscover the doxological dimension.⁶

The People of God and Dysfunctional Human Relationships

Since the fall, God has worked through subdominant people groups. As Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). Likewise, in the following passages, God reminds us to consider ourselves strangers and aliens:

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed

⁶ Ellis, “Sovereignty of God,” 138–39.

and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land *like a stranger in a foreign country* For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. (Heb. 11:8–10; italics mine, as below)

Today, the whole world is the promised land.

All these people were still living by faith when they died . . . admitting that they were *foreigners and strangers on earth*. . . . [T]hey were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. (Heb. 11:13, 16)

Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live out your time as *foreigners* here in reverent fear. (1 Pet. 1:17)

Dear friends, I urge you, as *foreigners and exiles*, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. (1 Pet. 2:11)

As strangers and aliens, what should be our outlook? We should have no real or vested interest in this world system. We should be completely focused

on our sovereign God and his kingdom; yet we are called to be agents of change in this world—all to the glory of God. Therefore, identifying with the oppressed should be as natural as breathing. If we follow this path, ethnic marginalization should be a rare occurrence within the body of Christ. This means being the champions of kingdom empowerment and kingdom transformation.

Israel, the Old Testament “church,” was to be a community marked by righteousness, social justice, and compassion for the oppressed. These covenant requirements also applied to the church, the New Testament “Israel.” When Jesus said, “Let your light shine,” it was against the backdrop of these same covenant requirements. Thus, just as the downtrodden looked to Christ in the first century, they should be able to look to the body of Christ today—provided we let our light shine.

Conclusion: God Will Be Glorified

The position of Christianity in America has been an anomaly. It has historically enjoyed the perks of the dominant culture. However, today the church is rapidly losing those perks. We have already seen the *marginalization* of Christianity. Today, we are beginning to see the *criminalization* of Christianity. Tomorrow will see the open *persecution* of Christianity.

All who identify with Christ are becoming a subdominant culture together because we are “pilgrims” in this world system; this is where we are supposed to operate. Those of us who live in the subdominant culture have always known how to navigate these waters.

What is the ultimate purpose of ethnicity anyway? We see a glimpse of it in Haggai 2:7: “‘I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the LORD Almighty.” We see the fulfillment of this glorious sight in Revelation 7:9–10:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

May God give us the grace to glorify him by discipling the nations. May he give us the grace to

disciple the nations by demonstrating the true meaning of ethnicity. Not by imitating the world system of ethnic power struggles, ethnic marginalization, and ethnic oppression, but in being on the vanguard of spiritual unity with ethnic diversity.

In the consummation, God does not just restore Adam's original condition; he brings us to a level of glory far beyond what Adam knew—both individually and relationally. As Karen Ellis has once said, “In Christ, the *creational image* will become the *eschatological image*; in Christ, mankind's *rebellious depraved image* becomes the *obedient righteous image*.”

Race. Can we ever get it right?

We *must* get it right today for the glory of God, and we *will* get it right when persecution comes. Either way, God will be glorified.

**FACING A PIEBALD HISTORY:
TOWARD A TRANSCULTURAL
COMMUNITY OF CHRIST**

Léonce B. Crump, Jr.

Our nation has a piebald history. Though many may long for the “good ol’ days” when life was simpler, such a time in our nation’s history is a chimera. It is a fantasy. And yet in contrast to the inequality that has colored much of our nation’s history (however much we may try to gloss over it) stands God’s transcultural vision for humanity. In this essay, I will first share a bit about my experience with systemic injustice toward African Americans. Next, I’ll offer a brief history of race in the West, particularly in the United States. Finally, I will challenge us as believers to step into our country’s narrative to point to a better way: God’s transcultural community.

When I was newly married to my wife Breanna, we were driving to Texas to visit my family in Louisiana. Somewhere near Shreveport, Louisiana, we were pulled over by the police. The officer came and tapped on my window and said, “Hey, boy . . .”

(At 6' 5" and 320 pounds, I did not take kindly to being called a "boy" by anybody.) Referencing our dealer tag, he continued, "That, uh, tag around your license is illegal." Now, having studied law, I knew very well that this was not an illegality, and so I kindly smiled as politely as I could and said, "Well, officer, I'm positive that it is not illegal. Is there any other reason that you have pulled me over today?" He retorted, "Don't get smart with me, boy!" This was 2008, and as I said, I was a young man.

Though my blood began to boil, I kept my cool. My wife, who is white in every sense of the word (we have moved beyond integration; she eats gumbo and I eat casseroles—we understand the gospel!), was very nervous. She's a California girl and had never experienced these things. I grew up in New Orleans, so when he asked me to exit the vehicle, I responded, "No. It's my lawful right to remain in my vehicle." She said, "Please, get out." He had already removed his gun from his holster. I exited the vehicle in that moment, only at the behest of my wife and because I had a small child in the back. The officer walked me away from my vehicle, while another circled around to the other window to ask my wife if she had been kidnapped and was being held against her will. I became infuriated and told the officer that I needed his badge number so that I could report him for his unbecoming behavior as a representative of law

enforcement. He took his badge off and put it in his pocket. And when I made a move toward a pen in my pocket, he brandished his weapon and told me to get on the ground. Now, the story resolved itself. This all lasted for about an hour. Another set of officers who arrived on the scene had to deescalate the situation, asking the original officer to calm down. I very well could have lost my life and left behind a wife and a young child. I did not receive a traffic violation that day—not a ticket, not a warning—because I hadn’t done anything.

I wrote about this interaction a couple of years ago in an article for *Christianity Today*, entitled “Will White Evangelicals Ever Acknowledge Systemic Injustice?” I wasn’t trying to be provocative with that title. I detailed the nature of this occurrence because, at the time, there was a lot of hooplah about police-related shootings. The way that they were being characterized was that these “thugs,” who did not know how to interact or engage with officers, were being aggressive toward said officers and so had to be put down with deadly force. My desire was to step into that conversation and debunk the “thug narrative.” Here I am, a homeowner, a father of three, married for ten years, holding three master’s degrees, pastoring a church, well-dressed; and I am subject to the same treatment. And so, is “thuggery” really the issue, or is our country founded on an intricate, often

now hidden, well-coordinated system that perpetuates injustice against its most vulnerable citizens? Because, surely, if you know me, you wouldn't consider *me* a thug.

What was most surprising was the reaction I received to this article from white evangelicals. There were fifty comments on Part One and fifty-six on Part Two. Ninety percent of those comments were negative. I'll share a few with you: "To make this a race issue is wrong. It is shameful for a pastor to further the racial divide by making this a racial issue." Here's another: "Segregation works." And another: "When I get pulled over or stopped by a policeman for no reason, I'm friendly, appreciative, understanding toward the officer. I've never had anything like this happen to me. So, is this systemic or anecdotal? My question to Mr. Crump is, 'Aren't you interested as to why they would perceive you as a threat?'" The comments go on in that fashion—from believers, from pastors, from seminarians who would rather dismiss their brother's story as an anecdotal display of race-baiting than step into the shattered reality in which we actually exist and ask the question, "Where is the church?"

Now, Dr. King, whom I quoted in that article, said this several years ago, and I think it's worth considering even now. He said, "The most pervasive mistake I have made related to the Civil Rights

movement was in believing that because our cause was just, we could be sure that the white ministers of the South, once their Christian consciences were challenged, would rise to our aid. I felt that white ministers would take our cause to the white power structures. I ended up, of course, chastened and disillusioned.” Brothers and sisters, as the pastor of what we describe as a “transcultural” church, I have no desire to heap guilt upon whites, nor do I desire to further the racial divide in the United States. What I do want to do is to urge you to earnestly consider whether you are honestly facing the reality of race relations in this country, and whether you see ourselves and the gospel as the solution.

The U.S. was a discovered nation, apparently. Except there were many peoples already living here. When the U.S. was “discovered,” the industry of the day was agriculture, and colonists quickly realized that they would not be able to adequately produce any income-making resources to sustain their lives. Before chattel slavery, hundreds of thousands of Irish were shipped to this nation to work as indentured servants—virtually as slaves. As an excellent foray into this history, I recommend the fascinating book *Working Toward Whiteness*.¹ Here, the author speaks

¹ David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White; The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

about how the immigrant population “became white.” This gives incredible credence, I think, to the transition to chattel slavery, when you understand that the first slaves here were mostly Irish.

A problem soon arose, however. Among light-skinned people (and not “light” in the black sense but in the sense of lighter light-skinned persons), it is very difficult to keep up with your slaves when they look like you. With a small tweak of vocal inflection one can switch from an Irish dialect to a standard English dialect. It was therefore very difficult to enslave the Irish. The cost of bringing them over was superseding their productivity, and so the eye of productivity turned to the natives. But the native peoples knew the land better than those who had discovered it. Because of their ability to escape and disappear into the topography around them, their literal unwillingness to yield—battle after battle and fight after fight—and their propensity to be devastated by European diseases, slavery of native peoples simply did not work.

Thus the eye turned to a practice of chattel slavery that the Dutch had employed for some time: remove a people from their land, put distance between them and their country of origin, change

Though the author is Marxist, this does not invalidate all of his opinions.

their names and mute their culture, and relegate them to property. As property, they would have no citizenship. In fact, they were here for 200 years without citizenship before the Declaration of Independence was written, declaring all men equal, except those who were considered property. That was the birth of chattel slavery in our nation, which successfully brought wealth to this nation in a way that nothing else ever had, wealth that still remains to this day. (Wells Fargo and its primary owners and stockholders, e.g., were once subsidiaries of the East India Trading Company, which was a primary catalyst for shipping Africans here as property.)

This is the piebald history of our nation. In 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was instituted, but in Louisiana and Texas (et al.) it would be nearly a decade before those people found out that they were actually free. For this reason, African Americans celebrate Juneteenth. Reconstruction took place from 1863 to 1877. During this very brief period, African Americans were elected to political office and were allowed to secure wealth and land in some areas. But Reconstruction was short lived. The wealthy, Southern, white aristocracy would not see their way of life challenged, so they raised up a terrorist organization called the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). At its height, the KKK was four million strong. They burned, lynched, and beat their way through the

South, until fighting for Reconstruction was no longer worth it. After Reconstruction came Jim Crow. Jim Crow lasted from 1877 to 1965. One cannot look at the history of this nation and say to an African American, “We are all equal.” You don’t have to be a mathematician to know that there has only been about fifty years or so of actual freedom in our country.

The most horrific and disappointing reality of this history is that the church stood alongside silent or was complicit in the oppression. Marsh, in his book *God’s Long Summer*, outlines a sad story during desegregation in which two young black women and a white woman went to the steps of Jerry Falwell’s church.² They asked to be let in, but were denied entrance. When they realized they were not going to be let in, they knelt on the steps and prayed aloud for their brothers and sisters. They prayed aloud that they would see that they had been created in the image of God, just as they had. They prayed aloud that they would be received into the family of God the way that they should be, that they would be welcomed in this community. Subsequently, two deacons were sent out to toss them physically down the stairs, where a paddy wagon awaited to take them to prison.

One of the great difficulties that I have found in

² Charles Marsh, *God’s Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 134–35.

leading, loving, walking with, and ministering to the majority culture (white people) is their desire to eschew history and hit a “reset button”—though one does not exist. If we are unwilling to acknowledge where we have been, then we cannot faithfully or adequately walk into a more wonderful and realized future. And so, yes, the desire is to say, “That’s all history, pastor. We now live in a post-racial society. President Obama said so. It was initiated at his election.” And yet, I can tell you, whether you want to count it an anecdote or not, that many of those same systems of oppression still exist. The existence of such systems tells us that we are indeed far from a post-racial society. Systems that were expressed as redlining in Chicago, when African Americans tried to buy houses, that kept my own father out of many neighborhoods that he desired to live in. Systems that even now still require young African American women in my church to change their names on applications just to get a job. Systems in which one lady, Georgia Tech’s salutatorian, who graduated with a 4.0 GPA, applied for a job as an African American woman and was declined. When she reapplied for the same job with the same company, only as a white guy named Rick with those same stats, she was hired over the phone.

Where is the church in all of this? Data tells us that only 3 percent of churches have, at a minimum,

10 percent of some racial or ethnic diversity. As Dr. King said, “Sunday is still the most segregated day of the week,” and Monday through Saturday are still filled with social and systemic injustices that plague people all around you. Brothers and sisters, this ought not be. These issues will not be solved by hiding behind academia, pious language, and aspirational desires. They are problems that must be addressed in the only way that they can be addressed. I believe now is the time for the church to step into the fullness of the biblical narrative and God’s ultimate ends for this world and his people, not only for his future kingdom, but in its in-broken, present, and realized state. That is where we get to this idea of “new ethnics.”

In Acts 11, we find that, for the very first time, the word “Christian” is used wholesale: *christianoï*, “the folks of Christ.” We find the church in Antioch and its beautiful, wonderful diversity of leadership. In Acts 7, after the stoning and murder of Stephen, the church was forced to scatter from Jerusalem. It was forced to scatter with this beautiful message of a God that was present, real, and tangible, of a God that loved, of a God that wanted more than anything for humanity to walk first in their identity as children of God than to be known by any other appellation. And so what we find there is great intentionality, even in the description of the leadership that was present.

According to Acts 13:1, “There were in the church prophets and teachers—Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.” It is worth noting that Luke takes time to note these men not only by name but by ethnicity as well. Why? Do you really believe that pretending racism isn’t real is going to solve it or that some feigned mirage of equality is God’s realized dream? No, Antioch was a beautiful display of what Paul called the new reality, a picture of what it means to move beyond integration, with which we are so very comfortable. Integration makes us feel as though the goal has been accomplished. Integration is, often, not costly. Integration allows me to not sacrifice any of my me-ness while pretending to appreciate your you-ness. It falls well short of what God desires. And so how do we get there? How do we take that massive step forward in light of our history, in light of the church’s virtual silence and ignorance of very prevailing realities?³

Colossians 3 is, perhaps, the most fundamental paradigm for how this happens. Paul begins by setting a condition: “If you have been raised with Christ.” He goes on to tell the Colossians that in this raising, a

³ See, further, Léonce B. Crump, Jr., *Renovate: Changing Who You Are by Loving Where You Are* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2016).

new reality has been created. It is a reality that revolutionizes the mind, because we set our minds on heavenly things. It is a reality that also affects the will, because we turn our desires kingdom-ward. He then goes through and lists all of the things by which we used to be defined. In 3:11, he makes what I believe to be the boldest declaration related to this label of *christianoī*. Many turn to Ephesians 2 when they speak of racial reconciliation, and I agree that it is a beautiful description of how Christ has “broken down the dividing wall of hostility,” making one new man (v. 14). But what Paul does in Colossians is tactically work through three binaries that we employ in order to parse ourselves from one another.

And so he says, “Here there is no Gentile or Jew [ethnic], . . . barbarian, Scythian [social class], slave or free [economic]” (Col. 3:11). Incidentally, the term *barbarian* originated with the Greeks, who found the language of other cultures so unintelligible that every time they spoke, it sounded as though they were saying, “Barbarbarbarbar . . .” So they called them “barbarians.” It was an issue of social standing. But if you have been raised in Christ, the way you think about this world changes, and as Paul says in Romans, you are given a renewed mind. That gives you a christological lens through which you look at everything, including people, social structures, society, communities, and even yourself, so that now,

you cannot be defined primarily by your ethnic identity. Now, you cannot be defined primarily by your economic aptitude. Now, you cannot be defined primarily by your societal standing. If you have been raised with Christ, you are defined as *christianoï*.

If I can look up in thirty years and have had a part to play in tearing down the idol of Western individualism that has consumed Christianity, I will be satisfied with my life. Because we don't get saved to Jesus and then choose to be a part of his community. We get saved to Christ and community. He died for a people, not a person. What Paul is describing here is not just a new way of being for you as an individual. He is describing a reality shift for our very beings; a reality that presses against the history that we've all watched unfold in different eras of our lives; a reality that presses against apathy with prevailing racial, ethnic, and social issues; a reality that says the gospel is truncated if it stops at just getting you to heaven and not guaranteeing a kingdom-reflective reality for any who would believe on this present earth. That is the new *ethnos*. That is the solution.

I believe in the intersection between law and business and not-for-profit. I believe those arenas have merit, but they will not solve the problem. And the next election will not solve the problem. #NeverTrump is not going to solve the problem. The

only thing that's going to solve the problem is for the church to refuse to fall short of this new *ethnos*, to count the cost and to pay it. Let me tell you: it is costly, and you will be accused of not preaching the gospel anymore. You will be accused of getting involved in politics. Some critics, though, simply need to read their New Testament, because the gospel affects all of life.

I would resolutely defend to anyone that the ultimate end of the gospel, according to Revelation 7, is the transcultural community of Christ, the community that is an unassimilated, woven tapestry of the full breadth of God's creative genius. And I choose that word *tapestry* with great care because, if you've ever seen one, you step up close and see all of the unique, individual threads. Not one of them fails to hold its uniquely woven constitution, but when you step back, you see a picture far more beautiful, made up of those individual threads, than the individual threads themselves. That is God's realized dream, and we can live it now.

**RACE RELATIONS FROM THE
HISPANIC PERSPECTIVE:
FROM BROKENNESS TO OPTIMISM**

Wilmer Ramírez

Hispanics are everywhere. They seem to be under every rock, in every business, and in most professions, churches, schools, social activities, and neighborhoods. As examples of this new demographic reality, the California school system is now 53.6 percent Hispanic;¹ Texas' Latinos comprise 38.2 percent of the overall state population; and Colorado has 1.1 million Hispanics.² Their presence is transforming America in many ways, from food and music to politics. Books like *Harvest of Empire*

¹ Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, "Summary: Latino/Hispanic Children," Kidsdata.org, accessed July 6, 2016, <http://www.kidsdata.org/demographic/17/latinohispanicchildren/summary#87/demographics>.

² Gustavo López and Renee Stepler, "Latinos in the 2016 Election: Colorado," Pew Research Center, January 9, 2016, accessed July 6, 2016, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/fact-sheets/2016-state-election-fact-sheets/latinos-in-the-2016-election-colorado/>.

(2011) and *Brown Is the New White* (2016) testify to an inevitable transformation in this country.³ In academic research, it is now customary to find articles addressing social issues that base their recommendations on the accelerated growth of the Hispanic community—namely, the projection that by mid-century Hispanics will comprise 24 percent of the entire nation.⁴

In light of this reality, the Hispanic presence will also impact race relations in many ways. Historically, the United States has been characterized by a rigid and relatively impermeable boundary, or color line, between blacks and whites.⁵ Today, for the first time in U.S. history, three racial/ethnic groups—whites, blacks, and Hispanics—each make up more than 10 percent of the U.S. population. Previous numerical realities meant that challenges to the hegemonic white-over-black racial order were contained enough

³ Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2011); Steve Phillips, *Brown Is the New White: How the Demographic Revolution Has Created a New American Majority* (New York: The New Press, 2016).

⁴ D'vera Cohn, "Future Immigration Will Change the Face of America by 2065," Pew Research Center, October 5, 2015, accessed July 6, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/10/05/future-immigration-will-change-the-face-of-america-by-2065/>.

⁵ Maria Abascal, "Us and Them: Black-White Relations in the Wake of Hispanic Population Growth," *American Sociological Review* 80, no. 4 (2015): 789–813.

not to disrupt it. However, with the new demographic reality, many experts are now questioning whether such a status quo can be maintained.⁶ Others like Leo Chavez say that the Hispanic population growth has the potential to destabilize both racial and national orders, because Hispanics are viewed and portrayed as both non-whites/non-blacks and non-Americans.⁷ Consequently, an important shift in social research in the U.S. is trying to understand race/ethnic relations from a triracial model. New questions are now under study: Are the experiences of America's newest non-white immigrant groups following the steps of their European predecessors? Are these groups becoming racialized minorities who see their experiences as more akin to those of African Americans than to earlier immigrants? Moreover, do Asians and Latinos—particularly the later-generation members of these groups—more closely resemble whites or blacks in the U.S. at this point in time?⁸ Finally, experts are also wondering how the interaction

⁶ Eileen O'Brien, *The Racial Middle: Latinos and Asian Americans Living beyond the Racial Divide* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

⁷ Leo R. Chavez, *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

⁸ Frank D. Bean and Jennifer Lee, "Plus ça Change . . . ? Multiraciality and the Dynamics of Race Relations in the United States," *Journal of Social Issues* 65, no. 1 (2009): 205–19.

between blacks and whites will be modified with the presence of a third group.

As interesting as it may sound, we don't have the space to unpack many of the implications that social experts are discussing. However, we will at least explore the main theories aspiring to understand and predict what will happen in America for the decades to come. Also, we will take a brief look at the implications and challenges that the new race-relations paradigm brings to the church of Christ from a Hispanic perspective.

By highlighting the Hispanic perspective, I am in need of clarifying at least two issues. First, despite all the discussion surrounding the use, meaning, and etymology of the terms *Hispanic* and *Latino*, in this essay they will be used interchangeably in reference to all people who are of Spanish or Latin American descent. Second, due to the amazing diversity among the Hispanic community, my first-generation Hispanic voice by no means represents all first-generation perspectives. Furthermore, I must admit my limitations to speak on behalf of all our 1.5-, second-, and third-generation Latinos who might evaluate race relations differently.

The Third Player

As noted above, the demographic change of the past decades has introduced a third player to the race-

relations scenario. The way each group interacts with the others is founded on perceptions. In human relations, perception plays a key role in defining reactions, attitudes, and eventually actions.

Perception can be either a catalyst or a polarizing factor in intergroup relations. It has mediated black and white relations for centuries, and again it plays a key role in defining how both will react to and manage the Hispanic presence. For both blacks and whites, the most salient Hispanic characteristic is not related to values, language, or even ethnicity. What has really drawn the attention to Latinos is their number and the perceived threat they pose to neighborhoods.⁹ The way they have grown to constitute 16 percent of the overall population is seen by many as a threat, and because people's sense of self-worth is tied to their group, threats to their group are assimilated as affronts to the self. As an example, McDermott reports that upper-middle-class blacks in one new immigrant destination expressed hostility toward Hispanics because they "felt that their community rather than they themselves were losing out at the expense of Hispanics."¹⁰ As a result of this

⁹ Cassi A. Meyerhoffer, "'I Have More in Common with Americans than I Do with Illegal Aliens': Culture, Perceived Threat, and Neighborhood Preferences," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1, no. 3 (2015): 378–93.

¹⁰ Monica McDermott, "Black Attitudes and Hispanic Immigrants in South Carolina," in *Just Neighbors? Research on*

demographic change, stereotypes and cultural perceptions that were dormant and of minor importance have now grown in disproportion to the point of pervasive generalizations.

An extensive line of research documents how the growth of one group affects attitudes and behaviors toward that group. Maria Abascal presents a good summary of the literature addressing this research:

Out-group size has been linked to an array of defensive reactions, including negative stereotypes (Taylor 1998), racial conservatism and opposition to desegregation (Fossett and Kiecolt 1989; Glaser 1994), lower education spending (Poterba 1996), lower support for welfare spending (Fox 2004), opposition to immigration (Quillian 1995; Schneider 2008; Semyonov, Raijmin, and Gorodzeisky 2006; Stein, Post, and Rinden 2000), punitive attitudes (King and Wheelock 2007), felon disenfranchisement (Behrens, Uggen, and Manza 2003), and the presence of the death penalty (Jacobs and Carmichael 2002). Along similar lines, Alba, Nee, and Nee (2005) find

African American and Latino Relations in the United States, ed. Edward Telles, Mark Sawyer, and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011), 243.

that anti-immigrant attitudes vary as a function of the perceived size of these groups.¹¹

Reactions like these are not unique to the established racial dichotomy. The members of the new group—in this case, Hispanics—also react to their own perception of whites and blacks and to the defensive reactions of both groups. For example, members of low-status groups may seek to cross an apparently permeable boundary and yet engage in competition when this boundary is viewed instead as impermeable or illegitimate. Another strategy, common in circumstances like these, involves a cognitive reinterpretation of the status quo. For example, members of a threatened group may disidentify with that group.¹² In other words, if Hispanics perceive that stereotypes or pervasive sentiments are too strong, they will tend to emphasize the personal, filial, or national traits that separate them from the rest of the group in order to gain acceptance.

Another aspect to consider in triracial relations is that race and nationality may be theoretically

¹¹ Abascal, “Us and Them,” 793.

¹² Naomi Ellemers and S. Alexander Haslam, “Social Identity Theory,” in *The Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*, ed. Paul A. M. Van Lange, Arie W. Kruglanski, and E. Torry Higgins (London: SAGE, 2012), 2:379–98.

understood as expressions of the same general phenomenon. However, racial and national boundaries can be experienced differently in the U.S., particularly if they demarcate different groups of people. Observed patterns of identification and behavior suggest that blacks and whites respond to Hispanic growth by prioritizing the most privileged identity—their whiteness or their Americanness—in order to exclude the growing group.¹³ For whites, this is their whiteness; for blacks, it is their Americanness. Hispanics themselves acknowledge that they could be excluded in this equation by virtue of their perceived foreignness or their phenotype. Conversely, in a three-way interaction, each party is for the first time confronted with a super-individual structure and not merely another party. Stated differently, the presence of three parties enables the formation of alliances across previously salient boundaries.¹⁴

Possible Outcomes

In a three-way race-relations paradigm, there are four different scenarios that could represent the future of the United States. In the first scenario, Hispanics, blacks, and whites withdraw into their racial groups and no alliances are formed between them. Here,

¹³ Abascal, “Us and Them.”

¹⁴ Ibid.

social strategies and reactions against each other will continue and increase, giving way to triracial stratification. However, this is really not as clean a cut between the three ethnic groups as we would imagine. According to Bonilla-Silva's Latin Americanization thesis, the U.S. will follow patterns similar to those in Latin America and the Caribbean countries.¹⁵ For him, social forces will develop three groups: whites, honorary whites, and collective blacks. Included in the "white" category would be whites, assimilated white Latinos, some multiracials, assimilated Native Americans, and a few Asian-origin people. "Honorary whites" would include light-skinned Latinos, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Chinese Americans, Asian Indians, Middle Eastern Americans, and most multiracials. Finally, the "collective black" category would include blacks, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Hmong, Laotians, dark-skinned Latinos, West Indian and African immigrants, and reservation-bound Native Americans. Even though Bonilla-Silva's thesis seems more concerned with phenotype than socio-economic and cultural factors, his point of view helps us understand that race relations in the future will

¹⁵ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "From Bi-Racial to Tri-Racial: Towards a New System of Racial Stratification in the USA," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27, no. 6 (2004): 931–50.

include the social interaction of more and more players added to the U.S. social reality.

The second scenario takes us to a place where white/non-white becomes the most consequential line of division. Here, Hispanics, blacks, and other ethnicities not considered white will unite around shared experiences of exclusion. For researchers Frank Bean and Jennifer Lee, this is no surprise, as this particular way of drawing the racial line has been reinforced throughout the history of the U.S.¹⁶ For example, in 1924 the state of Virginia passed a Racial Integrity Law that created two distinct racial categories: “pure” white and all others. The statute defined a “white” person as one with “no trace whatsoever of blood other than Caucasian,” and it emerged to legally ban intermarriage between whites and other races. While blacks were clearly non-white under the legislation, Asians and Latinos also fell on the non-white side of the strict binary divide.

Bean and Lee also identified two critical developments that have cemented the white/non-white divide. First, following the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, affirmative-action policies were extended to minority groups that were perceived as “analogous to blacks”—with respect to physical distinctiveness and to having “suffered enough” to be

¹⁶ Bean and Lee, “Plus ça Change,” 205–19.

similarly categorized. According to these criteria, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asians became eligible for affirmative-action programs, while disadvantaged white ethnics did not.¹⁷ The second development was the introduction of the label “people of color,” which gained momentum and popularity in the late 1980s.¹⁸ This label combines all non-white groups on the basis of presumed racialized minority status, thus connoting that the individuals to which they refer share a similar subordinate status vis-à-vis whites.

From the other side of the equation, Eileen O’Brien presents studies of generational differences in the racial attitudes of immigrants, which show that, with increased time in the United States, certain members of Latino and Asian American communities are more likely to express solidarity with African Americans than their recently arrived counterparts.¹⁹ This model of pan-racial solidarity suggests a new “people of color” coalition, which is able to demand more concessions from the state than African Americans alone had previously been able to attain.

In the third scenario, whites and blacks unite around an American identity that excludes Hispanics

¹⁷ Ibid., 211.

¹⁸ David A. Hollinger, “The One Drop Rule and the One Hate Rule,” *Dædalus* 134, no. 1 (2005): 18–28.

¹⁹ O’Brien, *The Racial Middle*, 2.

on the basis of national and cultural differences rather than racial ones. The assumption in this setting is that black individuals respond to the growth of Hispanics by prioritizing the most privileged identity to which they can plausibly reclaim. However, scholars claim that even if whites were to converge on an American identity, this would not guarantee that blacks could lay equal claim to this identity. If whites are determined to preserve their dominant position in the racial order, they are likely to succeed.²⁰

The fourth scenario depicts Hispanics successfully crossing the color line, much like European immigrants did in the first half of the twentieth century. Gans predicts this outcome and claims that black/non-black will become the most salient line of division.²¹ The concept of the black/non-black divide surfaced in studies that showed how non-white immigrant ethnic groups such as the Irish, Italians, and Eastern European Jews previously became white. In other words, as economic and cultural differences diminished and eventually faded between white and non-white immigrant groups, the Irish, Italians, and Eastern

²⁰ Abascal, "Us and Them," 806.

²¹ Herbert J. Gans, "The Possibility of a New Racial Hierarchy in the Twenty-First-Century United States," in *The Cultural Territories of Race: Black and White Boundaries*, ed. Michèle Lamont (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 371–90.

European Jews became racially reconstructed as white.²²

An interesting example of the above was documented by Loewen.²³ Chinese immigrants in the Mississippi Delta consciously modified their low racial status via economic mobility and the emulation of white cultural practices. They intentionally distanced themselves from blacks and rejected fellow Chinese who married blacks. By adopting the anti-black sentiment embraced by Mississippi whites and by closely following white moral codes, the Chinese were able to cross the black-white color line.

According to George Yancey, Latinos and Asian Americans in the middle stages of assimilation align more closely with white Americans than they do with black Americans.²⁴ He reaches this conclusion after observing Hispanic and Chinese residential patterns, marital patterns, and several key political beliefs. If this model holds true, then the next step over the next few generations is that Latinos and Asian Americans would move toward *identificational assimilation*; that is, becoming white. However, the model proposed by

²² Bean and Lee, "Plus ça Change," 213.

²³ James W. Loewen, *The Mississippi Chinese: Between Black and White* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

²⁴ George Yancey, *Who Is White? Latinos, Asians, and the New Black/Nonblack Divide* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003).

Yancey and others works very well with higher-income, educated, and second-generation Hispanics. Hispanics in the lower socioeconomic strata tend to follow the second scenario.

Another interesting study that seems to support the fourth scenario was produced by Ortiz and Behm-Morawitz.²⁵ It is based on *cultivation theory*, which focuses on television's contribution in shaping viewers' social perceptions, positing that much of what people know comes from what they watch. They argue that "[t]elevision's influence is facilitated by the consistency of its messages, its ubiquitous nature, and its vast reach. As such, television becomes fundamental to constructing viewer's [*sic*] perceptions about the world."²⁶ According to cultivation theory, television provides viewers with a consistent set of homogenized messages that, over time and with repeated exposure, influence consumers' perceptions of reality. In general, Spanish-language content shows that women appear in almost equal numbers to their male counterparts; men hold more professional jobs, whereas women fill more parental/familial roles; characters are frequently

²⁵ Michelle Ortiz and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz, "Latinos' Perceptions of Intergroup Relations in the United States: The Cultivation of Group-Based Attitudes and Beliefs from English- and Spanish-Language Television," *Journal of Social Issues* 71, no. 1 (2015): 90–105.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

family-focused; and lighter skin is privileged. Black Latinos appear very infrequently. Further, congruent with traditional gender stereotypes, attractiveness and youth are more often associated with representations of Latino women than intelligence and career status. Their analysis of both English- and Spanish-television content indicates that increasing exposure to English-language TV unfavorably influenced perceptions of prejudice and discrimination, while Spanish-language content tends to cultivate a preference for a whiter version in the Latino spectrum.²⁷

Finally, trying to predict how Hispanics will manage the race conundrum is very difficult. It might be that throughout the U.S. we will see all four scenarios developing in regions that cultivate the right conditions. Race relations will also be influenced by immigration trends, taking into account that the next big demographic development will be the rise of Asian communities. However, I agree with Alan Aja's approach that points out that there is an ingrained historical tendency in Hispanics toward what he calls "Blanqueamiento," or a whitening of the culture.²⁸ This blanqueamiento can be seen

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Alan A. Aja, "Anyone but Blacks: Latin@s, El Nuevo Blanqueamiento (Neo-Whitening), and Implications for Black-

throughout Latin America's colonial and post-revolutionary history. It refers to Spanish 300-plus-year policies that offered "free land and slaves to the poor in hopes that they would 'whiten' and 'civilize' already racially mixed populations through further intermarriage and acculturation."²⁹ In my own experience, I can remember how parents transmitted the idea that, when looking for a spouse, their children should try to "mejorar la raza," or better the race. That meant that youngsters should set eyes on lighter skin countrymen and women in order to improve their family's genotype and phenotype.

In the U.S. context, scholarly analyses that explore this unfortunate mindset suggest that U.S. society may be moving away from the "one-drop," hypodescent rule toward a pigmentocratic logic, similar to Latin America's dominant social order. In other words, according to Aja, "genotype, which still matters, is interacting with the increasing significance of 'phenotype' as populations of diverse social origins interact and mix. As these 'value constructs' intermesh and the latter seeks to replace the former, negrophobia remains the unmoved cultural and economic expression."³⁰

Brown Alliances," *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 14, no. 1–2 (2012): 88–116.

²⁹ Ibid., 98.

³⁰ Ibid.

Nobody knows how things will eventually develop. There are too many pieces interacting in this puzzle. Unfortunately, none of these scenarios will bring the relational peace and justice we all desire. Moreover, current events related to police abuse and anti-immigrant sentiment seem to lead toward a triracial withdrawal or a white/non-white scenario. Also, taking into account that Hispanics are experiencing a slow, upward socioeconomic mobility—as the second- and third-generation Latinos constitute 89 percent of the Latino children in the U.S.³¹—the fourth scenario is plausible.

A Reflection of Our Brokenness

When the future of race relations is viewed from the perspective of social science, it is not encouraging. However, there is some benefit in realizing that history, the reality in which we live, and intergroup-relation projections do not anticipate a good development for race relations. In addition, we note that reconciliation efforts, policy changes, and the establishment of a large number of initiatives have not produced the desired results. To be frank, social

³¹ Richard Fry and Jeffrey S. Passel, “Latino Children: A Majority Are U.S.-Born Offspring of Immigrants,” Pew Research Center, May 28, 2009, accessed July 6, 2016, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/05/28/latino-children-a-majority-are-us-born-offspring-of-immigrants/>.

research, in its descriptive function of human reality, has failed to propose viable solutions in this struggle. Therefore, perhaps in the midst of our frustration, we finally realize that the problem really lies in the raw materials with which we hope to construct racial peace. The struggle that we witness today is nothing more or less than the result of a sad reality: we are all a fallen race, and the inadequacy of social science to address our condition leads us to propose solutions from the perspective of faith.

A Christian approach to the racial problem reveals that the presence of evil in us produces individuals filled with fear (Matt. 6:25–34; Acts 19), selfishness (2 Tim. 3:2), and insensitivity (Rom. 1:31), with no brotherly affection (2 Tim. 3:3). Among other ills that afflict race relations, we are violent (Rom. 1:29), racist (Exod. 23:9), hoarders (Isa. 5:8), discriminators (James 2:1–9), prone to materialism (Luke 12:13–21), and capable of preying on those in need (Amos 2:6–8; Matt. 23:14).

These deficiencies are present in all races and permeate perceptions, racial interaction, and the social strategies with which we use to treat others. We assume that our worldview is the fairest, most just, and most reasonable. We dare to stereotype our fellow blacks as violent individuals, forgetting how the drug lords are idealized among us through the “narco-corridos” songs and novelas (soap operas),

which celebrate their adventures. We have the guts to say that this is a genetic issue, even though war is one of our preferred vehicles for resolving disputes in which our interests are threatened.³² We criticize our white counterparts as racist, unjust, and exploitative, although racism has pulsed through Latin American veins even from pre-Columbian times—in which we discriminated and exploited our own indigenous populations. We judge whites in spite of the fact that our attitudes toward newcomers in this country are very similar to theirs. We mark Hispanics with labels and derogatory generalizations. We also criminalize them and accuse them of stealing jobs and jeopardizing our American way. At the same time, we use their cheap labor to sustain our way of living. We like the benefits of their labor, but we don't want them here. Sincerely, the racial problem is more than social; it lies in the heart and cannot be solved until there is a change in the hearts, minds, and wills of individuals. This is the collective "US" and this is our brokenness!

The Introduction of a Fourth Player

If this is the condition from which we pretend to

³² Kevin M. Beaver, J. C. Barnes, and Brian B. Boutwell, "The 2-Repeat Allele of the MAOA Gene Confers an Increased Risk for Shooting and Stabbing Behaviors," *Psychiatric Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (2014): 257–65.

solve our racial issues, we have little hope for meaningful change. Being aware of our fallen nature, the church for decades has proposed Christ and his gospel as the solution to our problems—including, of course, our racial disputes. Scripture presents Jesus as a man with a defined genotype and phenotype, able to transcend the barriers of gender, culture, and race. His encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4), his inclusion of women in ministry (Luke 8:1–3), and his work in Tyre, Sidon, and Decapolis (Mark 7:31) are just a few examples. In addition, his teachings were culturally inclusive (Luke 10:25–37) and his plan above all was to bring light to the Gentiles (Matt. 28:19–20; Acts 1:8). Despite some difficulty, his followers managed to overcome their own racial and cultural biases, first in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1–7; 10) and then all over the known world (Acts 13–28). Their writings also reflect the powerful teaching of Jesus concerning unity without distinction of race: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Based on his understanding of Jesus’ teaching on race relations, Paul emphatically states: “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph. 2:14).

From a Christian perspective, the acceptance of the redemptive message of the gospel transforms the

individual reality and has shown throughout history its power to transform societies. The compelling example of Jesus' ministry and the power of his message are more than enough to solve our racial struggles. According to what has been presented here, what we need for the alleviation of racial tensions and disputes is the introduction of Jesus himself as the fourth party in the scene. His presence and message bring peace and relief to racial strife because in him we are one, regardless of race or skin color.

However, the reality that we experience is different. Centuries of Christianity in this country have not been able to overcome the racial struggle. The Scriptures, moreover, have been used to support slavery and justify the conquest of one people over another. While it is true that the gospel has been the engine of many significant changes throughout history,³³ we also have examples in other latitudes where, despite the increased presence of believers in the general population, there has not been a significant decrease in violence or racial discrimination against indigenous groups.³⁴ Does this

³³ James Davidson Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³⁴ Arturo Matute Rodríguez, Iván García Santiago, and Programa de Seguridad Ciudadana y Prevención de la Violencia del PNUD Guatemala, *Informe estadístico de la violencia en*

mean that the presence of Jesus as the fourth party is not enough? The impact of Jesus and his message in the biblical story leads us to doubt that this is the problem. More likely, the flaw is in his followers and the way that they have decided to represent him in the racial struggle.

Toward Healthy Race Relations

In this section, I do not intend to enter the debate over which strategy for social change, particularly change in race relations, is the most appropriate from a Christian perspective. I agree with Hunter that the spiritual, political, and social tactics that are often used to solve the racial struggle in our time are not mutually exclusive.³⁵ On the other hand, to say that the solution is that Christians should pray more, become more pious, or reach a deeper understanding of the social implications of the gospel is in some ways a simplistic perspective in relation to a complex problem. With this, I am indicating that this work does not pretend to offer the magic bullet, the key, or the solution to our racial enigma. Therefore, what follows is only a contribution to the long list of inter-racial peace efforts.

Guatemala (Guatemala City: Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo—Guatemala, 2007).

³⁵ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 18–31.

On the road to triracial conciliation, the Scriptures provide rich and potentially decisive insight. One of the most powerful elements is the significance of serving others as an expression of God's love. Jesus expressed this clearly in John 13:33–34, and his disciples modeled it in the communities where he sent them (Acts 2:45–47; 2 Cor. 9; James 1:27). In the church of the first century, the expression of loving and selfless service was instrumental in breaking racial and cultural barriers, catapulting the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. As a confirmation of this reality, studies in intercultural relations today confirm that cognitive and experiential interventions, in which participants engage other communities in service contexts, have proven to have a positive impact on the development of cultural competence, intercultural communication, and race relations.³⁶

Unfortunately, the church in this new triracial reality misses the incredible impact that interracial

³⁶ Jane Jackson, "Globalization, Internationalization, and Short-Term Stays Abroad," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 32, no. 4 (2008): 349–58; Joan G. DeJaeghere and Yi Cao, "Developing U.S. Teachers' Intercultural Competence: Does Professional Development Matter?" *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 33, no. 5 (2009): 437–47; and Susan B. Goldstein and Sadie R. Keller, "U.S. College Students' Lay Theories of Culture Shock," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 47 (2015): 187–94.

service can bring to the community. In general, the most common interracial service opportunities have a limited impact due to the low level of participation by the congregation, the sporadic scheduling of service events, and the paternalistic and assistentialist trends that some of these efforts promote. In addition to the above, minority and underserved groups tend to forget that they don't need to be rich—or a megachurch, for that matter—in order to offer loving acts of service to other groups.

Another problem that affects our ability to provide opportunities for interaction in contexts of service is the Old Testament “missiology modality,” which is exhibited in many of our churches today. From the very beginning of redemptive history, God chose Abra(ha)m to be a blessing to all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:1–3). Such a designation not only refers to the promise that the Redeemer would come to mankind from Abraham's offspring; Abraham was also called to be a blessing to others in his time. With the passing of time, the promise and responsibility of being a blessing were transferred to his descendants, who grew in number and became a nation. As a nation, God's promise and demand continued and were formalized in what is known as the Mosaic covenant. This covenant offered Israel the opportunity to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests, through which the knowledge of God would

be extended to all families of the earth. The way in which God's mission was achieved at this time was by means of the strategic positioning of Israel in the land of Canaan. Besides being a land of abundance and blessing, Canaan was a frequented passage of commercial activity between continents. Taking into account these geographical advantages, the divine plan was that by obedience to the statutes and the wisdom of the law, Israel would be established as a desirable model for the surrounding nations. People from all over the ancient Near East would come to Israel to learn about their God and his wisdom. In short, the missiological movement of the Old Testament, by which all nations would be blessed, was inward.

Today many churches are developing a pattern similar to this missiological model. Much of their effort and resources are invested in building churches that are attractive to the individual. Style, music, preaching, and the environment must connect with the values, mentality, and tastes of the visitor in such a way that he or she decides to make a particular church his or her home. Unfortunately, such an inward movement has had unintended consequences for the church and for race relations alike. First, this modality has developed a church-shopping mentality in the seeker that delays spiritual maturation and undermines ecclesial loyalty and service. Secondly,

this method has a homogenizing effect on the congregation, attracting only a certain type of congregant and, hence, sending away those that could contribute to diversity. In my experience, this happens across all three groups and is magnified by the diversity in the Latino community, where members even consider the pastor's national origin to make their decision of staying in a particular church.

In contrast, the New Testament developed an outward missiological pattern, as expressed in Matthew 28:19–20 and Acts 1:8. Even though the geographical movement toward the nations in these passages is commonly emphasized, it should be clarified that the local church in Jerusalem itself also showed an outward mentality through the service offered to the needy in the city. Acts of service in this congregation were vital to its own growth and to the spread of the gospel, regardless of cultural and racial differences. Hunter, in his historical overview of the growth of the church in the first century, notes:

When the bishops declared themselves to be “lovers of the poor” the church was unwittingly offering a new model of society. . . . The fact is, the Christian church reached more people. Even though it was still a demographic minority, a church that was seen to reach out to the margins of the social order established its “right to stand

for the community as a whole.” . . . The net effect was revolutionary. Because Christian charities were beneficial to all, including pagans, imperial authority in the society was weakened.³⁷

Conclusion

There is enough evidence from the Scriptures, from history, and from social science to claim that if the church in all three communities works to make interracial service part of their DNA, the reconciling power of the fourth party, Jesus, would be unstoppable across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic strata. If interracial service is used along with other spiritual, political, and social strategies, then we could consider a fifth scenario where not only three but more groups could find a safe, just, and welcoming environment in which to live and thrive. This is truly an exciting possibility, one that brings back the optimism to an obscure projection of our future.

³⁷ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 55.

EATING FRYBREAD: AMNESIA AND ANAMNESIS

Laurie M. Cassidy

[H]e took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “. . . Do this in memory of me.”

—Luke 22:19

Driving anywhere in the American Southwest, you are likely to find frybread in your travels. For example, if you drive from Monument Valley to the Grand Canyon, you will see road-side signs selling homemade frybread. The land you travel through on this route to the Grand Canyon is the land of the Diné—Navajo Nation.¹ Throughout Native America there are many variations of the recipe for frybread, but the basic ingredients are lard, flour, water, and salt. Some people make the dough rise with sour milk or dry yeast. As RoseMary Diaz explains, “Of all the

¹ For more on the Navajo Nation, see the website of its tribal government: www.navajo-nsn.gov (accessed June 24, 2016).

foods most commonly associated with Native American Culture, frybread has long been at the center of the table.”²

Returning to the words of the Gospel that begin my essay, for Christians the act of breaking bread reminds us of the saving life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We are commanded to remember Jesus through our breaking of bread and the celebration of our communion as the body of Christ, which is the anamnesis of Eucharist. In this essay, I will explore how our memory of Jesus calls us (particularly as white Christians) to awaken from the amnesia of racism and white privilege. This amnesia is a collective forgetting and erasing of the trauma, terror, and death-dealing pain of our American history.³ The

² RoseMary Diaz, “Frybread 101: A Basic Recipe and Timeline,” Indian Country Today Media Network, February 8, 2016, accessed May 27, 2016, <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2016/02/08/frybread-101-basic-recipe-and-timeline-163305>.

³ This amnesia has many dimensions. One dimension is to consciously repress or deny parts of history that challenge established systems of power. For example, the state of Texas and Tennessee have worked to change school text-book accounts of American history. Proponents of these changes argue that mentioning slavery tarnishes the contribution made by the founders of the United States. Hal Rounds, a spokesperson in Tennessee, stated that there has been “an awful lot of made-up criticism about, for instance, the founders intruding on the Indians or having slaves or being hypocrites in one way or another.” Trymaine Lee, “Tea Party Group in Tennessee Demands Textbooks Overlook U.S. Founder’s Slave-Ownning

cross of Jesus stands in judgment of this world's sin, but not only of our own personal sin. The death of Jesus points to the scandal of all suffering people throughout history, who are made invisible, erased, and forgotten in order that the principalities and powers of this world remain unchanged.

My essay will explore eating frybread as a practice that often enacts this forgetting of the history of suffering but at the same time holds the graced possibility of remembering and living in saving communion with God and one other. My intent is to magnify the simple act of eating and consuming such a basic food in order to understand how everyday activities connect us to people and histories of which we as white people have been socialized to be unaware. What I would like to suggest is that for white people in the United States, in many ways our eating of frybread demonstrates the everyday reality of racism in all its banal and terrifying complexity.

The central place of breaking bread in our remembrance of Jesus enriches our reflection on eating frybread in two ways. First, we will explore how our act of eating frybread is an unconscious way of enacting racism and white privilege. Paradoxically, a white person eating frybread on a trip to the Grand

History," *Huffington Post*, last modified July 9, 2012, accessed May 29, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/23/tea-party-tennessee-textbooks-slavery_n_1224157.html.

Canyon can both reveal and conceal a history of Native-American oppression. I will demonstrate that eating this bread makes present a history of suffering. At the same time, we can eat the bread with no idea of any of this painful reality. We can chew and swallow this bitter story without shedding a tear. To methodically explore this paradox brings us into the moral and spiritual dilemmas of how white privilege is reproduced in everyday life. Second, as Christians our act of eating has an even deeper dimension of meaning and significance. Jesus' practice of table fellowship transformed an everyday act of eating, basic to human survival, into a way of remembering our salvation. It is this communion with Jesus' death and resurrection that makes it possible for us to remember and respond to the history we live in. Our communion with Christ can provide the power to look at our situation and also to transform us into people who can respond to what we see.

My essay reflects upon frybread to provoke new ways of thinking about racism and Christian discipleship. The dominant paradigm of race in the United States is the black/white binary, but this view contradicts the history and demographics of our country.⁴ I will explore what we may discover if we

⁴ Juan F. Perea, "The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race: The Normal Science of American Racial Thought," *California Law Review* 85, no. 5 (1997): 1212–58. This article

shift our focus from race as a black/white problem, particularly what we may discover about ourselves as white people and as Christians. For example, this binary misunderstanding of race most often erases Native Americans.⁵ Denver Seminary sits on land that today we call Littleton. Historians believe the Apache inhabited this land as early as 1500 and were followed by the Comanche, Kiowa, and Arapaho. Doris Farmer Hulse notes, “About 1815, and probably at other times, a rendezvous was held between a group of French Trappers and members of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Kiowa, and other tribes, at a spot along Bear Creek just north of present Littleton.”⁶ Paul Chaat Smith, Comanche author and associate curator at the National Museum of the American Indian, suggests that to learn about Native America, we don’t have to study books about other places where we “think” Indians may have lived;

demonstrates how this binary understanding is a paradigm that contradicts history and our collective reality in the United States. In addition, as a paradigm it constructed—and this construction is created by, sustains, and serves—those who have power.

⁵ For a fascinating account of this problem and how it can be demonstrated through Hollywood films, see the 2011 Lionsgate film *Reel Injun*, directed by Neil Diamond, Catherine Bainbridge, and Jeremiah Hayes.

⁶ Doris Farmer Hulse, “Native Americans in the History of Littleton,” Littleton, last modified January, 2004, accessed May 27, 2016, <https://www.littletongov.org/index.aspx?page=381>. This website has a detailed and helpful list of sources for understanding Littleton’s history.

rather, he suggests we start “by looking for Indian history beneath your own feet.”⁷

As white Christians, we can come here to Denver Seminary without ever knowing the history and people of the land we inhabit. Ironically, we can even judge this information to be irrelevant to the task at hand. Our purpose in seminary is to prepare for ministry in the church, but we function in a manner that ignores the terrifying and violent history of a people who not only looked like us but also made it possible to stand upon this land and inhabit it. The privilege of being white is to remain ignorant of the history right beneath our feet.

The danger of such ignorance and arrogance is that those who “forget” history are doomed to repeat it. In May of 2016, Governor Hickenlooper and the Commission to Study American Indian Representations in Public Schools released a detailed report on the impact of mascots in Colorado. The commission’s report describes the imagery of American Indian mascots as “based on stereotypical and false historical narratives of violence, ferociousness, and savagery”⁸ It is a struggle to

⁷ Paul Chaat Smith, *Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 12.

⁸ Gillian Weaver, Antonio Mendez, and Earnest House Jr., *Governor’s Commission to Study American Indian Representations in Public Schools, Report 2016* (Denver: Governor’s Commission to Study American Indian

openly and honestly discuss the impact of stereotypes in America today. This issue of mascots can be dismissed as “just a joke” or, if people claim it is hurtful, the response might be, “You’re too sensitive!”⁹ Iris Marion Young makes an astute observation regarding our dismissal of stereotypes:

If politicizing agents call attention to stereotypes and devaluations as evidence of deep and harmful oppression of groups stereotyped and degraded, they are often met with the response that they should not take these images seriously, because their viewers do not; these are only harmless

Representations in Public Schools, 2016), 11, accessed May 29, 2016, <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/atoms/files/CSAIRPS-Report-2016.pdf>. See also J. Gordon Hylton, “Before the Redskins Were the Redskins: The Use of Native American Team Names in the Formative Era of American Sports, 1857–1933,” *North Dakota Law Review* 86 (2010): 879, 891.

⁹ Because of the limited space of this essay, I cannot elaborate on this point, which needs extensive theological treatment by Christians (a pun intended: we need the treatment! We need more research and analysis for understanding our faith). When stereotypes are dismissed, who is doing the dismissing—the subject of the stereotype or the object? Some individuals will claim that names have been called of them, and they don’t mind; therefore “everyone should get over it.” It is important to look into the connection of this name calling and the physical, psychological, and social well-being of the groups where individuals claim it is fine to be called a name, a slur, or some form of derogatory stereotype.

fantasies, and everyone knows they have no relationship to reality. Once more reason is separated from the body and desire, and rational selves deny attachment to their bodies and desires.¹⁰

In other words, we can think rationally about people who don't look like us. But if we look around, much of our world is not dominated by reason but rather by feelings, impressions, and bodily reactions.¹¹ Brain research has recently demonstrated that we can educate children to be tolerant, but if popular culture is rife with stereotypes, our tolerance education will be fruitless.¹²

The stereotypic mascot of the savage and dangerous Indian presents to young people an idea of Native Americans that betrays Colorado history and the actions of white Americans. The Sand Creek

¹⁰ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 136.

¹¹ Steve Inskeep and Shankar Vedantam, "How the Hidden Brain Does the Thinking for Us," NPR Books, January 25, 2010, accessed May 27, 2012, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=122864641>.

¹² For more on this idea of the unconscious yet very active images that condition perception and judgment, see Shankar Vedantam, *The Hidden Brain: How Our Unconscious Minds Elect Presidents, Control Markets, Wage Wars, and Save Our Lives* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2010).

Massacre of 1864, considered one of the most horrific massacres in American history, took place just 150 miles from Denver near the town of Eads, Colorado.¹³ Chief Black Kettle and a number of bands of Cheyenne and Arapaho had come for peace talks and to seek refuge in a local U.S. Army fort. They were told by government authorities to stay at Sand Creek until a local commander received further orders. On November 29th, 700 cavalymen began to attack this encampment as Black Kettle raised the American flag and other people waved white flags. Tony Horwitz recounts how Capt. Silas Soule, who refused to participate in the massacre, described the slaughter: “‘Hundreds of women and children were coming towards us, and getting on their knees for mercy,’ he wrote, only to be shot and ‘have their brains beat out by men professing to be civilized.’ Indians didn’t fight from trenches . . . ; they fled up the creek and desperately dug into sand banks for protection.”¹⁴

¹³ See <http://sandcreekmassacre.net/sand-creek/> (accessed June 24, 2016). This site has detailed historical information.

¹⁴ Tony Horwitz, “The Horrific Sand Creek Massacre Will Be Forgotten No More,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, December, 2014, accessed May 29, 2016, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/horrific-sand-creek-massacre-will-be-forgotten-no-more-180953403/?no-ist>. This is part of a letter written by Lt. Capt. Silas S. Soule to his commanding officer Major Ed Wynkoop, dated December 19, 1864. He describes the massacre as lasting six to eight hours.

Soule described how the bodies of Cheyenne and Arapaho were mutilated and pillaged “for trophies.”¹⁵ It was not until 2007 that the United States government dedicated the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site.¹⁶

Conversion: Turning to History

As white people, we are socialized to see race as something other people have; people of color “have a race.” We view being white as race-neutral because our society associates race as equaling color with skin color. We view whiteness as absence of color; therefore, we are devoid of race. Our misunderstanding makes us view racism as “out there” somewhere. “It” is a problem for people of color, and if we/white people are charitable enough and want to, we can choose to help out people of color with “their” problem. Racism is not really related to my white existence, unless I desire to “help

See <http://sandcreekmassacre.net/witness-accounts/> (accessed June 24, 2016).

¹⁵ Horwitz, “Horrific Sand Creek Massacre.”

¹⁶ See “Sand Creek Massacre: Photos and Multimedia,” National Park Service, accessed June 24, 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/sand/learn/photosmultimedia/index.htm> and also the official website of the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, <http://www.sandcreeksite.com/> (accessed June 24, 2016). I highly recommend the work of Gary L. Roberts, *Massacre at Sand Creek: How Methodists Were Involved in an American Tragedy* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2016).

out.” But as political theorist Iris Marion Young explains, “Trying to identify the cabal of bigots whose intended goal is to keep blacks down is easier than coming to terms with the paradox that normal practices within which people act with good intentions continue to produce significant evil.”¹⁷ In other words, Young is pointing out that it is easy to imagine racism as the product of certain bad people who are white-supremacist or neo-Nazi. It is much more difficult to see how my white identity and everyday life as a white person is shaped by racism and white privilege. It may be “easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle” than for us as white American Christians to understand how deeply embedded we are in a history we live out every day, and of which we are only partially aware. But as Jesus reminds us, “What is impossible for mortals is possible for God” (Luke 18:27; cf. v. 25).

I kindly ask the reader of this essay to consider: “If you are white, when did you discover you were white?” As I was growing up, I never saw race as something “I had.” I grew up in an all-white neighborhood in suburban Massachusetts. My Scot/Irish-American family never talked about race or racism. It was not until the desegregation of the

¹⁷ Iris Marion Young, “Katrina: Too Much Blame, Not Enough Responsibility,” *Dissent* 53, no. 1 (2006): 42.

Boston city school system that I witnessed physical violence against black people by Irish-Americans.¹⁸ As a young adult, it took ten years ministering with inner city youth of color in Boston to see that I was “white,” though I did not know what my identity entailed. My relationships with young people of color held up a mirror that made me see myself and begin a process of growing self-awareness, but the process was “as through a glass darkly.” Later in graduate school, my friend Betsy Hasagawa and I were having lunch and she asked me about “my white racial identity.” I was stumped by her question. “My *what?!?*” Being ashamed at not having a clue what Betsy meant, I mumbled something. She looked at me intently as if imploring me and asked, “Laurie, what does it mean for you to be white?” This question was a grace, which became a key opening a door into my journey of conversion, a graced call by God to explore my whiteness.¹⁹

¹⁸ For an in-depth analysis of systems of oppression that were operating in the desegregation of Boston schools, see Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). For a personal account of these events, see J. Anthony Lukas, *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families* (New York: Vintage, 1986).

¹⁹ There are many resources for the white reader to engage in an exploration of whiteness. A sample of books includes Shelly Tochluk, *Witnessing Whiteness: The Need to Talk about*

Part of growing up white in America is being socialized to not be aware of our reality. Charles Mills describes that we have been born into a “racial contract” which involves individual and collective ignorance. Mills brilliantly diagnoses the perverse nature of how we whites are socialized into “knowing” the world. To be white, we agree to an “officially sanctioned reality [that] is divergent from actual reality. . . . [O]ne has an agreement to *misinterpret* the world. One has to learn to see the world wrongly, but with the assurance that this set of mistaken perceptions will be validated by white epistemic authority, whether religious or secular.”²⁰

Race and How to Do It (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010); Robin DiAngelo, *What Does It Mean to Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy*, rev. ed. (New York: Peter Lang, 2012); Robert Jensen, *The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism, and White Privilege* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2005); Paul Kivel, *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice*, 3rd ed. (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society, 2011); Tim Wise, *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son* (Berkeley, CA: Soft Skull, 2011); Frances E. Kendall, *Understanding White Privilege: Creating Pathways to Authentic Relationships across Race*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013).

²⁰ Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 73. Quoted in Barbara Applebaum, *Being White, Being Good: White Complicity, White Moral Responsibility, and Social Justice Pedagogy* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 37. Italics in the text.

For Mills this covert contract maintains the privileges of whites over non-whites.²¹ Being born white, we sign on to the racial contract, “producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made.”²² We may be more aware of racial injustice that people of color suffer than how our whiteness makes us complicit in this suffering.²³

As a Christian, I describe my journey of awakening to my whiteness as a process of conversion. As in Acts 9, Paul’s conversion begins with God’s action. Saul falls from his privileged position upon his horse. From the ground, he is able to hear the voice of Christ speaking as the persecuted: “Saul, Saul! Why do you persecute me?” (v. 3). Saul is blinded in this experience and must be led into a new place to be healed and brought to sight. Because of God’s action, he will never see the world the same again. Our English word *conversion* is derived from the Latin *vertere*, meaning “to turn.” Being in ministry is to be in a position of power and authority. In my experience of ministry, my conversion in understanding my white identity involved being

²¹ Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 14.

²² Ibid., 18.

²³ On this point, see Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

willing to allow God to turn me toward my experiences of feeling disoriented, not knowing, and being blinded.²⁴ Conversion involved my being willing to be turned to these places of discomfort, from which God created a new grounding and new way of seeing myself and the world. How has God led you to places where you were no longer “in the driver’s seat”? How have these experiences brought you to see reality from a different vantage point, one more “grounded” in reality? Have you ever felt blinded by new experiences in ministry? Have you listened to people of color—and let them lead you? Moreover, as white Christians we must help each other trust that these experiences are integral to our turning to Christ in the world today and to our understanding of how to live the gospel—not only preach about it.

Let’s return to the act of eating frybread to demonstrate our conundrum as white people. According to historians, frybread was first created in 1864. The United States government forced the Navajo to relocate from their homelands in Arizona to Fort Sumner in Bosque Redondo, New Mexico. In

²⁴ For a profound treatment of this spiritual stance, see Alex Mikulich, “(Un)Learning White Male Ignorance,” in *Interrupting White Privilege: Catholic Theologians Break the Silence*, ed. Laurie M. Cassidy and Alex Mikulich (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007), 160–78.

the dead of winter, the U.S. Army drove 9,000 Navajo at gunpoint to Fort Sumner. This 300-mile journey to internment is known by Navajo as the “Long Walk.” Navajo staples were corn, squash, and beans, which the Diné could not take with them. In order to prevent the Navajos from starving, the U.S. government “gave” them lard, flour, salt, and sugar, much of which was rancid. It was in this historical context, and from this combination of ingredients, that the Navajo created frybread.²⁵

This crime against Navajos, which many people consider genocide,²⁶ has roots in President Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Act of 1830 in which Eastern Woodlands native people in the Southeast were forced from their lands.²⁷ Jackson’s “land grab”

²⁵ My brief summary does not do justice to this heartbreaking history. To gain a deeper understanding of these events, see Peter Iverson, *Diné: A History of the Navajos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002); and Jennifer Denetdale, *The Long Walk: The Forced Navajo Exile* (New York: Chelsea House, 2007).

²⁶ David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

²⁷ Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Act deserves its own theo-ethical treatment. For a more detailed account of the political roots and enactment of Jackson’s genocidal policies, see Steve Inskeep, *Jacksonland: President Andrew Jackson, Cherokee Chief John Ross, and a Great American Land Grab* (New York: Penguin, 2015); Andrew F. C. Wallace, *The Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1993).

included the Chickasaw, Seminole, Choctaw, Cherokee, Muskogee, and Creek, who were forced to relocate to “Indian Territory” west of the Mississippi River. Historians estimate that 100,000 people were driven from their homes, and 15,000 died in what has become known as the “Trail of Tears.” The Trail of Tears is a collective term for the suffering of forced removal of many native peoples from their homelands by the United States’ government.²⁸ All over Native America you will find recipes for frybread.

“Frybread appears to be nothing more than fried dough.”²⁹ It is a simple combination of ingredients, from which Native peoples created something from nothing, and now “[i]t represents both perseverance and pain,” suffering and survival.³⁰ Award-winning author Sherman Alexie contends that “Frybread is the story of our survival.”³¹

²⁸ For a compilation of Native American voices regarding these events, see Colin G. Calloway’s two volumes, *The World Turned Upside Down: Indian Voices from Early America* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1994); and *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground: Plains Indian Views of How the West Was Lost* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1996). These volumes offer a valuable historical perspective because Calloway draws upon primary sources and the voices of Native peoples.

²⁹ Jen Miller, “Frybread,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, July, 2008, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/frybread-79191/>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

To eat something is to have it become part of us. As the saying goes, “you are what you eat.” When white people eat frybread, we are eating this bitter history of suffering and survival. However, we can eat this without any conscious recognition that we are eating this history. We have been taught to live an ahistorical existence in relationship to the history that appears as marginal to “real” American history. The Battle of Little Bighorn, Wounded Knee, and the Middle Passage are for other people to remember (e.g., during *their* history month). As Ralph Ellison writes,

Perhaps more than any other people, Americans have been locked in a deadly struggle with time, with history. We’ve fled past and trained ourselves to suppress, if not forget troublesome details of national memory, and a great part of our optimism, like our progress, has been bought at the cost of ignoring the processes through which we’ve arrived at any given moment of our national existence.³²

³² Ralph Ellison, “Blues People,” in *Shadow and Act* (New York: Random House, 1995), 250. Quoted in D. Marvin Jones, *Race, Sex, and Suspicion: The Myth of the Black Male* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 15.

For many white people, it is illogical to make any connection between something that seems as random as frybread and the Trail of Tears and everyday life in contemporary America. There are a variety of objections we voice when connections like this are made in conversations on race in America. For example, some of us will claim that our families came to America after these events occurred, and therefore these events have nothing to do with us. We can choose to remain ignorant of this history and pretend it is not our history. As Nancy Pineda-Madrid explains, “We cannot view the world as an experience of the present nor merely as an experience external to ourselves; rather we must realize that it lives within us and in our communities.”³³ As a white Christian and American, I am inviting us to reflect on the way we have been socialized to be unconscious of this process, because no Navajo can make or eat frybread without knowing and remembering this history of suffering.

We often eat frybread thinking, “Ah, I had a Navajo meal!” and then we drive on, unaware of the irony, as we travel to the Grand Canyon. We could even take a picture of the frybread and post it on our Facebook page or Twitter it to show our friends. We

³³ Nancy Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation in Ciudad Juárez* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 126.

might even feel good we supported a Navajo business and talked to “a real, live Indian.” But we move on with no sense that the history we have consumed is also our history. Eating frybread in this scenario does not bring about any change in relationships between a white person and a Navajo. We may feel some satisfaction, but the social relationships stay the same. Any satisfaction I feel as a white person may even prevent me from exploring this experience more deeply because I may deceive myself into thinking that I know Native America now.

Albert Nolan explains how integral Jesus’ practice of table fellowship was to his ministry. Jesus’ practice of breaking bread with people from all levels of society was healing and transformative on multiple levels. To break bread together is to become companions. The English word *companion* is derived from the Latin *com* (“with”) and *paneo* (“bread”); our companions, then, are those with whom we break bread. Jesus’ eating with people considered to be social outcasts was a sign to them, and to the larger community, that he was their companion. Nolan argues that Jesus’ table fellowship communicated God’s desire for us to be his companions, but it also created the possibility for new ways of being

companions to each other.³⁴ How can our breaking of bread in Jesus' name enable us to become authentic companions to people in America whose history we share?

“Do This in Memory of Me”: Healing Amnesia through Anamnesis

As Johann Baptist Metz warns, this strategy of selective memory harbors a great danger for Christian discipleship. According to Metz, when we erase the suffering of history we actually begin a process of erasing ourselves as subjects of history:

Having refused to recognize ourselves in the dark underside of history, we gradually lose a sense of our presence even in the grandeur and triumphs of history. We would no longer be the subjects who create ourselves in our society and history but rather the objects of social and historical processes which, although created by humans, are no longer humane but run according to standards of efficiency, standardization, and maximization of profit.³⁵

³⁴ Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 37–44.

³⁵ This quotation is from Pineda-Madrid, *Suffering and Salvation*, 131.

Metz's warning against selective memory demands a turning to history. For white American Christians, our conversion means turning to our everyday experience and, with God's grace, having the courage to explore how these experiences are imprinted by history, moreover, by a deeply repressed and forgotten memory of suffering and oppression.

To remember is also a way to understand how white privilege has cut us off from our own history as white people.³⁶ In his book *When the Irish Became White*, Noel Ignatiev demonstrates that in order to gain the privileges of whiteness, immigrants to America had to trade in their ethnicity.³⁷ Trading in our ethnicity for white privilege demanded a forgetting of the struggle of our ancestors. As a Scot/Irish American, I grew up unaware of the fact that my own ancestors were unjustly accused and imprisoned. One example took place in 1875 at the Carbon County Jail in Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania.³⁸ At this jail coal miners were held and hanged for

³⁶ Mary Elizabeth Hobgood, *Dismantling Privilege: An Ethics of Accountability* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2000), 40.

³⁷ See Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991).

³⁸ For more on this, see the Old Jail Museum's website, www.theoldjailmuseum.com (accessed June 24, 2016).

murders they did not commit. Cartoons also portrayed the Irish as monkeys.³⁹ As David Roediger has detailed, this painful transition from ethnic identity to whiteness has been the journey of many immigrants to America.⁴⁰ The amnesia demanded of whiteness not only forgets the oppression inflicted upon my own ancestors but also keeps me from discovering their power to resist.

For white Christians in the United States, this turning to our deep historical memories is a central task of our faith. As Metz has made clear, anamnesis is a central activity of our life and practice of belief.⁴¹ The central memory of our faith is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. According to Metz, the memory of Jesus' death is a "dangerous memory" because it holds an imperative to remember other human beings who suffer in history. Our practice of anamnesis in our breaking of bread in Jesus' name is a practice that interrupts the seductive power of historical amnesia. To remember Jesus' death creates the possibility of

³⁹ One such cartoon is called "Outrageous" and was published in *Life* on May 11, 1893; it can be found online at xroads.virginia.edu/~ma04/wood/ykid/imagehtml/monkey_irish.htm (accessed June 24, 2016).

⁴⁰ David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White; The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

⁴¹ See James Matthew Ashley, *Interruptions: Mysticism, Politics, and Theology in the Work of Johann Baptist Metz* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998).

white Christians remembering history, particularly history's underside. For Metz, to ignore this history is to forget the dangerous memory of Jesus' death and to live as if his resurrection did not matter to history. The amnesia of white privilege can keep us from authentically remembering Jesus and, therefore, participating in the power of his resurrection.

Ironically, by trying to stay innocent of history in the past, we actually are removing ourselves as agents who can change the course of history today. By erasing the suffering of human beings, we are unconsciously saying that such events "just happened" through an anonymous course of events. By denying any agency in the history of suffering, we begin to erase the exercise of agency in any historical event. No authentic change is possible because human action does not matter. We all become the victims of history.

INTRODUCTION TO THE VERNON GROUNDS INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ETHICS

In every age, God raises up people who not only have a keener sense of his ideals for life in community than their contemporaries, but who also have the courage and foresight to pursue these ideals for themselves and the ability to lead others to do the same. For more than a generation, Vernon Grounds played such a prophetic and catalytic role in the arena of social ethics within the evangelical community. In doing so, he established a legacy of Christian witness in the social domain that has been hailed by many as epoch-making and pace-setting.

It is to perpetuate Vernon's legacy of a vigorous Christian engagement in the public domain that the Vernon Grounds Institute of Public Ethics was established at Denver Seminary, where he has given a lifetime of dedicated service.

In embracing this task, and keenly aware of Dr. Grounds' lifelong convictions, the institute makes several bedrock commitments. First, it is committed to always anchoring its teaching and position in the

Word of God. Second, it will endeavor to remain true to the Christian worldview and the evangelical understanding of Christian faith. And driven by the passion to see these resources brought to bear on social reality with a view to transforming it for the better, it further commits itself to pursuing an ethical agenda that will seek to be as all-embracing as its means allows.

From what has been said so far, it should be clear that the VGI's arena of endeavor is social ethics. But it needs to be said that, in laboring in that realm, its mission is mainly educational. More precisely, what it aims to do is provide an environment, resources, and tools with a view to sensitizing, educating, and training Christians in a broad array of ethical issues so that they may be empowered and equipped to fulfill the biblical mandate to be "salt" and "light" in a morally decadent world (Matt. 5:13–14; Phil. 2:15–16). As used here, the term *Christian* is meant to embrace several groupings: students in training, Christian leaders, lay persons, and the broader Christian community.

In pursuit of this educational mission, the institute intends to employ a variety of delivery modes, including lectures, workshops, seminars, and informal discussion; and, of its own limitations, it welcomes partnership with others who are also

interested in a comprehensive and robust Christian witness in the public square for the glory of God.

Dieumème E. Noelliste
Director of the Vernon Grounds
Institute of Public Ethics